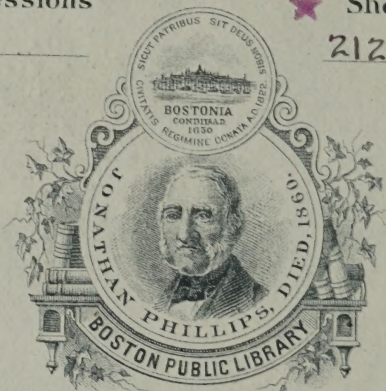


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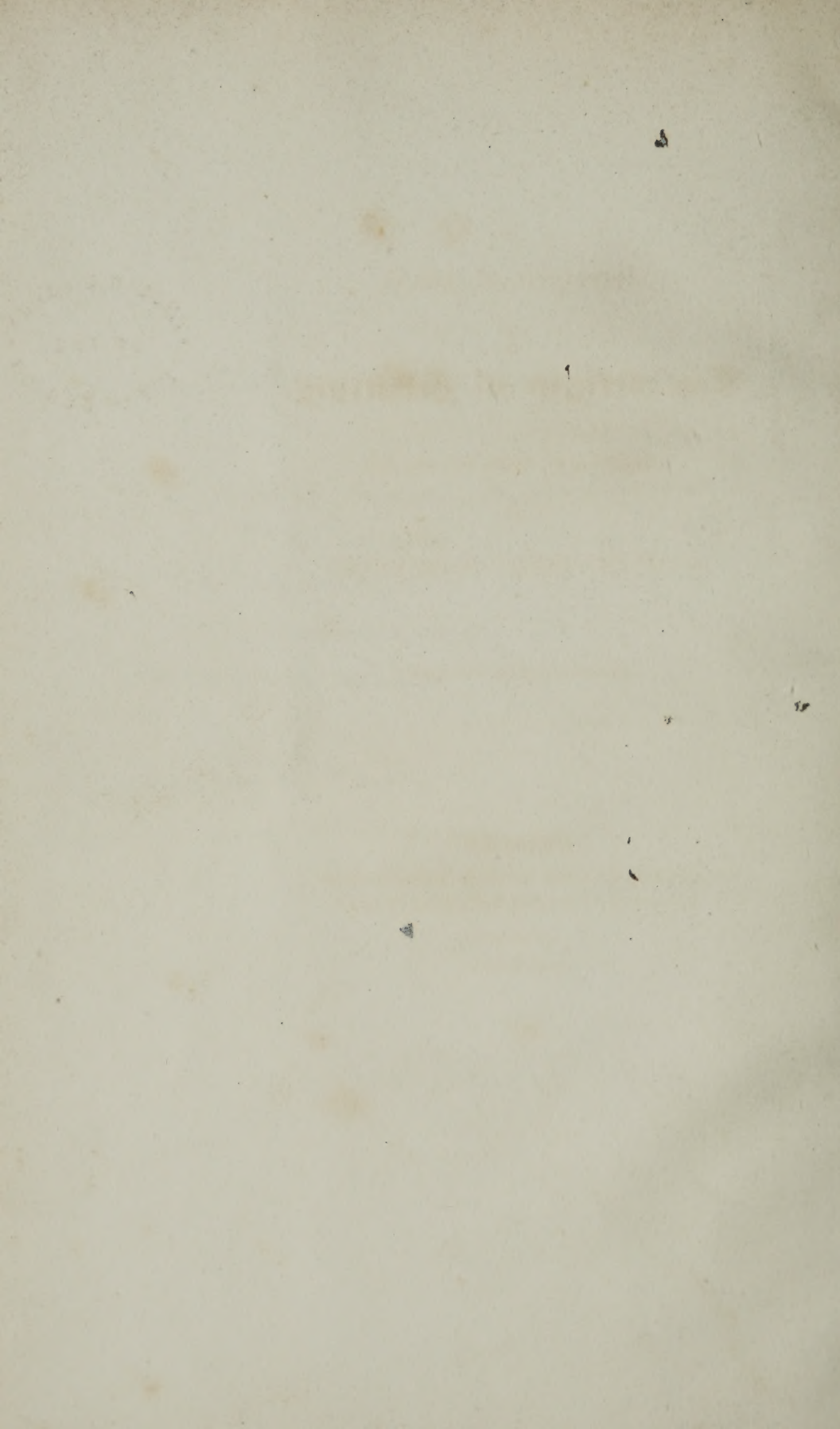
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AN
HISTORICAL ESSAY
ON
The Origin of Printing,

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
OF
M. DE LA SERNA, SANTANDER.

Newcastle :

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SANTANDER'S ESSAY ON THE ORIGIN OF
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UNDERTAKEN AT THEIR REQUEST,
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY
THE TRANSLATOR.

ADVERTISEMENT.

AMONGST the many Essays which have been written upon the History of Printing, few have acquired a more merited celebrity than that which is prefixed by M. De La Serna, Santander, to his *Dictionnaire Bibliographique choisi du Quinzieme Siecle*.* The estimation, in which it is held by all well informed bibliographers, has long pointed it out to the Translator as deserving of a more general diffusion than it was likely to attain, whilst it remained confined to a foreign language, and formed part of a rather large and expensive publication. This opinion meeting with the approbation, and coinciding with the object, of the Typographical Society of Newcastle upon Tyne, he has, at their request, been

* Published at Brussels, in 1805, in 3 vols. 8vo.

induced to undertake this translation of it, which is now submitted to the decision and patronage of the public. Of the manner, in which he has executed the task he has undertaken, it is not for the Translator to speak; but he may be permitted to state, that it has been more his object to give a correct transcript of the ideas and arguments of the Author, than to make a studied display of his own powers of composition.

T. H.

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b

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INTRODUCTION.

THE number of books, which have been written upon both the general and the local History of Printing, is so great, that the mere enumeration of them would almost fill a volume.* The consideration of this circumstance had at one time entirely deterred me from pursuing the design I had formed, of writing upon this subject; but when I reflected, that, independent of the difficulty of procuring these works, many of which are now very rarely to be met with, the diversity of opinion which prevails amongst their authors, the violent prepossessions of some in favour of their system, the errors and mistakes of others, exacted from their readers a continued attention and much study in order to

* The Author here gives in a note a short list of the principal works on the History of Printing; but as it is very incomplete, it has not been thought necessary to insert it. A very complete list will be found in Horn's *Introduction to Bibliography*, vol. ii. page 469.

arrive at a knowledge of the truth, I again adopted my original design of publishing my thoughts upon this interesting portion of literary history.

The History of Printing being in fact one of the most important branches of bibliography, it becomes absolutely indispensable for all those, who desire to make any progress in the knowledge of books, and more especially for the persons charged with the care and preservation of libraries, to have some precise ideas of its origin and of its progress; and at the same time to possess a knowledge of the celebrated artists, who, by their talents, contributed the most to the perfection of this art, which is generally regarded as the most useful discovery that has been produced by the genius of man.* For we ought not to confound the utility of an art with the abuse which may be made of it; some austere persons, some modern Catos struck with the strange abuse, which has in this age been made of printing, have at times declaimed against this beautiful art; but this circumstance cannot in any manner authorise others to decry the

* *Ars illa ingeniosa, quâ non alia unquam extitit cæteris artibus promovendis et quibuscumque rebus peragendis utilior.*
—*Maittaire, Annal. Typogr., vol. iii. page 3.*

Nulli nisi nauticæ praxidi, nec utilitate, nec dignitate, nec subtilitate secunda.—*Cardanus de Subtilitate, lib. xvii.*

art of Printing itself, the perversion alone of which ought to excite their censure. The rapid progress, which the arts and sciences have made since its discovery, is an unequivocal proof of its utility. Before the invention of Printing letters were confined to only a small number of rich monasteries and individuals, who were capable of paying a considerable sum of money for a copy of a good work. Books were at that time appreciated as highly as jewels; they were so rare and held in such estimation, that they were left by will to the greatest favourites, and conveyance was sometimes made of them from one individual to another, by regular contract, as if they had been real property.*

* Many instances of the excessive price of books, before the invention of printing, may be seen in La Caille's *Histoire de l'Imprimerie*, pages 3 and 4, and in Schelhornius's *Observationes ad Card. Quirini Librum de optim. Script. Edition. Rom.* page 104, note (*h*); but nothing, in my opinion, better shews the estimation in which they were held, and the value which was attached to these literary treasures, than the letter which the Doctors of the Faculty of Medicine, in Paris, wrote to King Louis XI. on the subject of the work of Rasis, which they had lent, by his order, to the President Jean De La Driesche; in this letter is seen the singular precaution they took for the security of this book. The letter is as follows:—

Notre souverain Seigneur, tant et si très-humblement que nous pouvons, nous nous recommandons à votre bonne grâce,

As an historical essay, a rapid glance at the origin and progress of Printing may be regarded as a necessary introduction to this work (*Dictionnaire Bibliographique*), I resolved to draw out this abridged view of what is most true and certain in the History of Printing, taking for my guides, not only the best authors, who have written on this subject, but more especially authentic documents, as well as the positive facts, resulting from the actual existence of the first editions with dates, and bearing the name of the place where they were printed.

et vous plaise sçavoir, que le Président Messire Jean De La Driesche nous a dit que lui aves rescript, qu'il vous envoyast *Totum continens Rasis* pour faire escrire ; et pource qu'il n'en a point, sçachant que nous en avons un, nous a requis, que lui voulussions bailler.

Sire, combien que nous avons gardé très-précieusement ledit livre, car c'est le plus beau et le plus singulier trésor de notre faculté, et n'en trouve-t-on guères de tel ; néanmoins nous, qui de tout notre cœur désirons vous complaire, et accomplir ce qui vous est agréable, comme tenus sommes, avons délivré audit Président ledit livre pour le faire écrire, moyennant certains gages de vaisselle d'argent, et d'autres cautions, qu'il nous a baillé en seureté de nous le rendre, ainsi que selon les status de notre faculté faire ce doit, lesquels nous avons tous jurez aux Saints Evangiles de Dieu garder et observer, ne autrement ne les pouvons avoir pour nos propres affaires.—Priant Dieu, Sire, etc. Ce 29 Nov. 1471.

AN
Historical Essay
ON THE
ORIGIN OF PRINTING.

THE first authors, or inventors, of printing,¹ who probably did not foresee how materially this happy

¹ I speak here only of printing properly so called, that is, with separate letters or types; for we ought not to regard as such the art of engraving writing upon stones, wood, and metals, from which many writers have taken occasion to assert, that the art of printing was known to the ancients. If I had a desire to increase this volume, I could easily dilate upon this subject, and report, at full length, in order to support this assertion, the proofs afforded by Homer, Plutarch, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Cicero, Quintilian, and other ancient authors; but this erudition, of no utility to our present object, would at most only prove, what all the world knows, that the art of engraving letters was known to all the nations of antiquity. It is, without doubt, very surprising, that the Greeks and Romans, who carried the art of engraving, both *en creux* and in relief, to the highest degree of perfection, should not have arrived at the discovery of

discovery was destined to promote the diffusion and advancement of letters,—and still less, perhaps, the honour and celebrity, which they were themselves

printing, which they may be said to have had almost within their grasp, and of which, it seems, nothing was wanting to them but the execution; but this shews, that the finest inventions are often owing more to chance than to the genius of artists. The gems, the seals, the medals, the marbles, the inscriptions, the laws engraven upon brass, and other remains of antiquity, attest, and shew to us, that the ancients even had an actual knowledge of printing with fixed characters. To prove this, I shall only mention the metal stamp, or signet, found near Rome, and now in the collection of the Duke of Richmond, and of which a detailed description and figure may be seen in the *Philosophical Transactions*, vol. xl. no. 450, art. xi. page 388. This remarkable stamp, on the back of which is a ring for a handle, is two inches long, and thirty-three fortieths of an inch wide; the characters, which are Roman capital letters, are seven fortieths of an inch high. It bears the following inscription engraved in reverse and in relief:—

I I I C E A C I O
N S E A I M E E H

Which, on an impression being taken, expresses these words,

C I C A E C I L I
H E R M I A E . S N .

That is, *Caii Julii Cæcilii Hermiæ signum.*

[It is observed, with great plausibility, by the describer of this signet, in the *Philosophical Transactions*, that as the rim

one day to derive from it,—always carefully endeavoured to keep the art a secret, being solely occupied with their pecuniary interests, and with the means of deriving all the profit possible from their invention.

II. Hence arises the difficulty of being able to fix precisely the era of the discovery of this useful invention, the glory of which many cities have emulously strove to appropriate to themselves. Mentz, Strasburg, Harlem, Dordrecht, Venice, Rome, Florence, Bologna, Basle, Augsbourg, &c. have aspired to this honour; and their respective claims have occasioned warm disputes amongst men

and letters are all exactly of the same height, and as the field of it, or that part which has been cut away, is very rough and uneven in its depth, this curious stamp has evidently been used for making an impression in ink on some even surface, and not for being impressed into wax or any other soft substance; for had it been intended for the latter purpose, the field would certainly have been rendered as smooth and even as possible.

A somewhat similar stamp of bronze, bearing a Greek inscription, is in the possession of the Antiquarian Society of Newcastle upon Tyne.—*Archæologia Æliana*, vol. i. appendix, page 6.]

It appears certain, that they were obliged, even with an oath, to guard the secret of their art: “*Inventores primos id clam habuisse omnesque secreti conscios, religione etiam jusjurandi interposita exclusisse.*”

Maittaire, Annales Typographici, vol. i. page 4.

of letters, in numerous controversial and critical writings, which have successively appeared upon this important point of literary history.

III. I shall discuss, in this Essay, the claims of the cities of Harlem, Mentz, and Strasburg only, which have the most warmly contended for the honour of this invention, and the only ones which can boast of producing striking and unequivocal proofs in support of their pretensions. Yet, I think, we must set aside the city of Harlem, the claims of which, more noisy than solid, being founded upon vague reports and hearsays only, are really unworthy of belief; and certainly the claim of Harlem, in spite of all the efforts of the celebrated and very learned Mr. Meerman to sustain it, is regarded by the bibliographers of the present day as a mere fable. Indeed, the result of the work of Mr. Meerman (*Origines Typographicæ ; Hagæ Comitum*, 1765, 2 tom. 4to.),³ notwithstanding the learned researches which it contains, is nothing but a typographical system, built almost entirely upon

³ This work of Mr. Meerman, and the incredible efforts, which he has therein made, to defend the cause of Harlem and of Coster, are so much the more remarkable, as some years before he entertained a contrary opinion. In fact, in the month of October, 1757, the celebrated Jan Wagenaar, by whom we have

suppositions and conjectures, suggested by an excessive love of his country,—an excusable prejudice, from which the greatest men have not been exempt.

an excellent history of Holland,* wrote a letter to Mr. Meerman, in which, on sending to him some observations, which he had made upon a Flemish edition of the celebrated *Speculum humanæ Salvationis*, he expresses his desire to be made acquainted with Mr. Meerman's opinion on the discovery of printing. To this letter, Mr. Meerman makes a reply,† of which, as it is not yet much known in the republic of letters, I here add a translation, for the gratification of the reader.

“ To Mr. Jan Wagenaar.

“ SIR,—A few days after my arrival in this place, I received with pleasure the letter, which you have done me the honour to write to me; and I feel extremely obliged to you, for what you communicate to me concerning the difference between the two editions of the *Speculum humanæ Salvationis* (*Spiegel onzer Behoudenis*). I perfectly agree with you about what relates to the antiquity of one above the other; yet I think it may be shewn, that the Latin *Speculum* is more ancient than the two Flemish editions; this is apparent, amongst other things, from the little Latin sentences, which are found engraved under the wood cuts. Now if these cuts had been first used

* *Vaderlandsche Historie*, tweede druk; Amsterdam, Isaac Tirion, 1752; 24 vols. 8vo. with plates. The first edition is much sought after, on account of the proof impressions.

† This reply, as well as the letter which gave rise to it, will be found at the end of the work entitled, *Het Leven van Jan Wagenaar*; Amsterdam, by Yntema en Tieboel, 1776; in 8vo.

IV. In fact, the work of Mr. Meerman, and those of all the authors, who have written either before

for your Flemish edition, these sentences, as well as the text printed below them, would certainly have been expressed in the language of the country.* But the opinion of the pretended discovery of printing, by Laurence Coster, begins more and more to lose its credit. All that Seitz relates to us about it, and all that has been adopted into the history of the country, are mere suppositions; and the chronology, respecting the discoveries and performances of Coster, is a romantic invention, to which I can oppose one much more probable in honour of Guttenberg. It may be proved by plausible arguments, without yet being able to give a formal demonstration of it, as I remember to have informed you verbally, that the printed text of the *Speculum* is of a date long subsequent to that of the cuts, and that it was, perhaps, printed a long time after 1470; which is not surprising, since these same cuts were also made use of in the Culemburg edition of 1483. Hence it appears, that if any thing belongs to Coster, it is only the cuts,—and thus, if we would be indulgent, the invention of Coster will have consisted in the knowledge of engraving letters in wood, or in some other

* Mr. Meerman has, in the sequel, destroyed his own argument, with the greatest facility, in saying that Coster had, with his ordinary discernment, arranged it so, that he had been able to avail himself of these blocks, for the Latin edition, which he proposed to publish: “*Dicendum potius est, (Orig. Typ. vol. i. page 126,) bene omnino rebus suis consuluisse prototypographum, dum a Belgicâ editione, quæ magis per vulgus spargi poterat, artis suæ facturum periculum, Romano tamen sermone argumenta includi tabellis voluit,.....ut hæ ipsæ inservire post modum Latine editioni possent.*”

or after him, in favour of the claim of Harlem, contain only commentaries upon, and conjectural

material; but this differs, as the night from the day, from printing with separate types. All the other known pieces also, except the *Speculum*, are from simple wooden blocks with letters engraved upon them; but it yet remains to be proved that they were done by Coster. Likewise, how could Fust, who learned the art from Guttenberg, have been so impudent as to state, in all his editions published after 1457, that printing had been discovered in Germany? And if the fact had been otherwise, would there not have been found some Dutch printer, or writer of a chronicle, who would have refuted that pretension? But so far is this from being the case, that the Dutch chronicle, commonly called *De Dvoisicchronyk*, even in the edition of 1517, places printing, not under the chapter of national, but of foreign, discoveries. I fancy, indeed, that it is sufficiently evident that the art is of foreign origin, and that the laurel crown ought to be plucked from the head of Coster, since Professor Schoepflin has found, in the archives of Strasburg, the authentic papers of a process, from which it appears, (as Mr. Schoepflin wrote to me a fortnight ago,) that Guttenberg had discovered printing at Strasburg, in 1436. Therefore, if it be true, that Coster printed with separate types, of which there is not an iota of proof, can it be shewn to us that he exercised this art before 1436? For if it took place afterwards, nay, if he even then had practised the art, not acquiring it from hearing of what had been done by others, but from his own invention, Guttenberg was the first inventor. These judicial papers will be published by this learned professor, after the publication of the second volume of his *Alsatia Illustrata*, which will be in a year's

interpretations of, the too celebrated story, related in the work called *Batavia*, by Hadrian Junius, an

time. I ought not, perhaps, to publish my Essay, before that period, in order that I may derive every advantage from the matter contained therein ; and besides I yet expect much information, and have the hope of acquiring 17 works printed by Fust and Schoeffer, of which there is not such a collection in the libraries of Paris, Vienna, the Vatican, and other places ; these books will also probably throw some light upon the subject. I shall be obliged to make, upon the works printed by Fust, some observations suggested by certain verses by Schoeffer, placed at the end of the *Institutiones Justiniani* of 1468. In short, I hope to be able to communicate some new observations, and a list of 41 or 42 works printed by Fust and Schoeffer, of which about the half were known to Maittaire, Marchand, &c. Time, however, and more labour than would be believed, will be necessary for all this ; but, when I meet with any thing relating to this subject, I do not fail to take note of it. I ask pardon for having interrupted you so long in your important occupations ; but I know that you sometimes relieve your mind by speculations of this nature. I have the honour to subscribe myself, with much esteem, your's, &c.

“ *The Hague, 12th October, 1757.*”

Those, who have read the *Origines Typographicæ* of Mr. Meerman, in which he defends so pertinaciously the pretensions of Harlem, will undoubtedly be astonished at the contents of this letter. One is at first tempted to think, that Mr. Meerman, to undergo such a change of opinion, must have found in his later researches, some proof or authentic document in favour of Harlem ; but in examining his work with attention, one is

author later by more than a century, than the pretended discovery of printing, made in the city of Harlem, by Laurence Coster.⁴

V. As this story, this fabulous narrative of Junius, (who was settled in Harlem about the year 1560, where, according to all appearances, he composed his *Batavia*, published after his death at Leyden, in 1588,) is the only paper, the only testimony, the only document, upon which the partisans of the city of Harlem found their typographical system, it is necessary to notice it particularly. The following is nearly the substance of this narrative:⁵

much surprised to find therein, to make use of the expression of the letter, not an iota of proof; on the contrary, he proves there, as we shall see in the sequel, that the too famous proto-typographer, the said Coster, has not even existed.

⁴ Hadrian Junius (de Jonghe), a native of Hoorn, in West Friesland, after having long practised physic at Harlem, was obliged, by the storm of war, to retire into Zealand, where he died the 16th of June, 1575, of vexation at having lost his library and manuscripts, by the pillage of Harlem, in 1573. It appears, by the dedication of his *Batavia*, addressed to the States of Holland, and dated the 6th of January, 1575, that this work was then ready for press; but his death, happening some months after, probably retarded the publication of it till 1588, when it was printed at Leyden, *apud Franciscum Raphelengium*, in 4to.

⁵ I here add Junius's own words from the Leyden edition of 1588, 4to. pages 255 and 256:—

VI. "It is now about 128 years," says Junius, "since Laurence, the son of John, a citizen of Harlem, and surnamed Coster (that is, sacristan or

"Habitavit ante annos centum duodetriginta Harlemi in ædibus satis splendidis (ut documento esse potest fabrica quæ in hunc usque diem perstat integra) foro imminentibus è regione palatii regalis, Laurentius Joannes cognomento Æedituus Custosve (quod tunc opimum et honorificum munus familia eo nomine clara hæreditario jure possidebat), is ipse qui nunc laudem inventæ artis typographicæ recidivam justis vindictis ac sacramentis repetit, ab aliis nefariè possessam et occupatam, summo jure omnium triumphorum laurea majore donandus. Is forte in suburbano nemore spatiat (ut solent sumpto cibo aut festis diebus cives qui otio abundant) cœpit faginos cortices principio in literarum typos conformare, quibus inversa ratione sigillatim chartæ impressis versiculum unum atque alterum animi gratia ducebat, nepotibus generi sui liberis exemplum futurum. Quod ubi feliciter successerat, cœpit animo altiora (ut erat ingenio magno et subacto) agitare, primumque omnium atramenti scriptorii genus glutinosius tenaciusque, quod vulgare lituras trahere experiretur, cum genere suo Thoma Petro, qui quaternos liberos reliquit omnes ferme consulari dignitate functos (quod eo dico ut artem in familia honesta et ingenua, haud servili, natam intelligant omnes) excogitavit, indè etiam pinaces totas figuratas additis characteribus expressit: quo in genere vidi ab ipso excusa Adversaria, operarum rudimentum paginis solùm adversis, haud opistographis: is liber erat vernaculo sermone ab auctore conscriptus anonymo, titulum præferens, *Speculum nostræ Salutis*: in quibus id observatum fuerat inter prima artis incunabula (ut nunquam illa simul et reperta et

church-warden, at that time an honourable office, and which his family had long held by hereditary right), amused himself, during his walks in the

absoluta est) uti paginae aversae glutine commissae cohærescerent, ne illae ipsae vacuae deformitatem adferrent. Postea faginas formas plumbeis mutavit, has deinceps staneas fecit, quo solidior minusque flexilis esset materia, durabiliorque: è quorum typorum reliquiis quæ superfuerant conflata cœnophora vetustiora adhuc hodiè visuntur in Laurentianis illis, quas dixi, ædibus in forum prospectantibus, habitatis postea à suo pronepote Gerardo Thoma, quem honoris causa nomino, cive claro, ante paucos hos annos vita defuncto sene. Faventibus, ut fit, invento novo studiis hominum, quum nova merx, nunquam antea visa, emptores undique exciret cum huberrimo quæstu, crevit simul artis amor, crevit ministerium, additi familiae operarum ministri, prima mali labes, quos inter Joannes quidam, sive is (ut fert suspicio) Faustus fuerit ominoso cognomine, hero suo infidus et infaustus, sive alius eo nomine, non magnopere laboro, quod silentum umbras inquietare nolim, contagione conscientiae quondam dum viverent tactas. Is ad operas excusorias sacramento dictus, postquam artem jungendorum characterum, fusilium typorum peritiam, quæque alia eam ad rem spectant, percalluisse sibi visus est, captato opportuno tempore, quo non potuit magis idoneum inveniri, ipsa nocte quæ Christi natalitiis solennis est, qua cuncti promiscuè lustralibus sacris operari solent, choragium omne typorum involat, instrumentorum herilium ei artificio comparatorum supellectilem convasat, deinde cum fure domo se proripit, Amstelodamum principio adit, indè Coloniam Agrippinam, donec Magontiacum perventum est, ceu ad asyli aram, ubi quasi extra telorum jactum

wood near that city, with forming letters of the bark of the beech tree, by means of which he printed upon paper some verses and short sentences, for the instruction of his grand-children. With the assistance of his son-in-law Thomas, the son of Peter, he afterwards invented an ink, more viscous and tenacious than common ink, which was found to blot and fill the letters; with this new ink he printed, in the Flemish language, the *Speculum nostræ*

(quod dicitur) positus tuto degeret, suorumque furtorum aperta officina fructum huberem meteret. Nimirum ex ea, intra vertentis anni spacium, ad annum à nato Christo 1442, iis ipsis typis, quibus Harlemi Laurentius fuerat usus, prodisse in lucem certum est Alexandri Galli *Doctrinale*, quæ grammatica celeberrimo tunc in usu erat, cum Petri Hispani *Tractatibus*, prima fœtura. Ista sunt ferme quæ à senibus annosis fide dignis, et qui tradita de manu in manum quasi ardentem tædam in decursu acceperant, olim intellexi, et alios eadem referentes attestantesque comperi. Memini narrasse mihi Nicolaum Galium, pueritiæ meæ formatorem, hominem ferrea memoria et longa canitie venerabilem, quod puer non semel audierit Cornelium quendam bibliopægum, ac senio gravem, nec octogenario minorem (qui in eadem officina subministrum egerat) . . . commemorantem rei gestæ seriem, inventi (ut ab hero acceperat) rationem, rudis artis polituram et incrementum, aliaque id genus Quæ non dissonant à verbis Quirini Talesii Cos. eadem ferè ex ore librarii ejusdem se olim accepisse mihi confessi, etc.”

Salutis, a work composed of images and letters. The leaves of this book being printed on one side only, the pages, which were left blank, were afterwards pasted together. After this, Coster abandoned the use of wooden letters, and adopted metal ones; forming them at first of lead, and latterly of tin, which metal is rather harder than the former; some metal wine cups, made from the remains of these letters, may yet be seen in the dwelling house of his descendants. The great profits, which the inventor derived from this new art, induced him to increase his establishment, and with this view he took some workmen into his family. One of these, who was called John, surnamed Fust, as is suspected, or some other person bearing the name of John, it is of no great consequence which, after having learnt the art of arranging and casting types, as well as all other matters relating to the art of printing, in the knowledge of which he had been initiated under the obligation of an oath, seized the opportunity of his master being engaged at mass, on the night of Christmas-eve, to carry off all the types and implements used in the printing office. He went with his plunder to Amsterdam in the first instance, then to Cologne, and finally settled at Mentz, where he established a printing

office, in which were printed, in the year 1442, with the types stolen from Harlem, the *Doctrinale Alexandri Galli* and the *Tractatus Petri Hispani*.”

VII. In support of this romantic narrative, composed of the hearsays of divers old men, Junius adduces the testimony of Quirinus Talesius and Nicolaus Galius, his old tutor, both of whom had informed him, that they had, in their youth, heard this same story related, more than once, by a certain bookbinder, nearly 80 years of age, named Cornelius, who professed to have been one of Coster's domestics.

VIII. Such is the substance of this celebrated fable, the only authentic document which the writers of Holland have to support them in so emphatically advancing the pretensions of Harlem. But it is very evident that Junius has had no other object in view in narrating it, than merely to embellish his description of the city where he then resided, by the recital of a tale, which was unknown before his time, and of which the report had been but very recently promulgated.

IX. That such was the case is evident, since no Dutch writer, nor any work of the 15th or of the beginning of the 16th century, has made the least mention of this fact,—not even the celebrated

Erasmus, who, from having been born at Rotterdam, in the year 1467, could not be ignorant of so remarkable an event, and one so glorious to his native country.⁶

X. But the love of their country, the prejudice to which it naturally gives rise, and a desire to flatter the self-love of their countrymen, have induced some Dutch writers eagerly to adopt this fabulous narrative of Junius,—a narrative upon which they have chosen to comment, according to their fancy, adding new suppositions and conjectures, in order to form a history of printing, which,

⁶ A remark of considerable importance may be made here. Quirinus Talesius, the very person adduced by Junius in support of his famous narrative, was for many years the secretary of Erasmus; it cannot, therefore, be supposed that Erasmus could have been ignorant of a fact, related with all its circumstances by his secretary to Hadrian Junius. If he knew of it, it is very difficult to believe, that this learned writer could have silently passed over so remarkable an event; especially as he had so many opportunities of speaking of the history of printing,—as he lived on terms of friendship with Thierry Martens of Alost, a celebrated printer of Belgium,—and as he had such an interest, if the fact had been true, in preserving this honour to his country. But so far is he from corroborating it, that whenever he has spoken of the invention of printing, he has always attributed it to Mentz and not to Harlem, respecting which he does not say one word.

without adducing any proof in support of it, they have wished us to receive as an incontrovertible fact.

XI. But the contradictions, which we find amongst the narrators of this fable, and their different modes of interpreting the recital of it, evidently demonstrate to us, that they have but endeavoured to embellish it by fresh inventions.

XII. Thus Petrus Scriverius seriously narrates to us, in his *Laurecrans*,⁷ that Laurence Coster, having found in the wood of Harlem the branch of a beech, or rather of an oak tree, torn off by the wind, he cut off a piece of it, which he wrapped up in paper, after having, for amusement and pastime, formed or notched upon it some letters. —That having then fallen asleep, it happened, that this piece of oak wood, being moistened by a shower of rain, or some other fortunate accident, communicated to the paper the colour of its sap or juice, as it is the nature of this kind of wood to do, and left imprinted on it the letters which he had

⁷ This tract will be found at the end of a work entitled, *Beschryving ende Lof der Stad Haerlam, door Samuel Ampzing; Harlem, 1628, in 4to.* It will also be found, translated into Latin, in *Wolfii Monumenta Typographica*, vol. i. page 209, et seq. Petrus Scriverius was born at Harlem in 1576, and died in 1660.

cut. This circumstance, being observed by Laurence on his awaking, suggested to him the idea of the art of printing; first by means of letters cut, in reverse order from right to left, on blocks of wood, and afterwards by separate moveable letters cut singly.⁸

XIII. Never did a poet invent a more absurd fable to embellish his subject, than this pretended sleep of Laurence Coster, with its consequences; Mr. Meerman therefore rejects this tale, less, however, perhaps on account of its extravagance, than of its not agreeing with the narrative of Junius, which is the fundamental support of his darling system.

XIV. It may indeed be observed, that, although Scriverius positively asserts, that he does but follow the steps of Junius in his recital, he has, nevertheless, thought himself at liberty to depart from them in many essential points. He does not, for instance, agree with Junius in opinion, that the *Speculum humanæ Salvationis* was printed by Coster with the separate types, made of the bark of the beech tree, the product of his first invention, (as if it could ever have been possible to print with

⁸ Pages 9 et seq. and in *Wolfii Monumenta Typographica*, pages 222 and 223.

such types) ; Sriverius, on the contrary, maintains, that the first essays in the art were made with fixed characters engraven on blocks of wood.⁹ He maintains also, that the *Speculum humanæ Salvationis*, the cuts of which are engraven on wood, has not been printed with separate wooden, but actually with fused metal, types ; and he charges Junius, with either never having examined this work with sufficient attention, or having been led into error by false accounts of it.¹⁰

XV. Sriverius is not the only author, who has taken the liberty of dissenting from Junius on this point. Pet. Bertius, Jos. Scaliger, under the name of Janus Rutgersius, Buxhornius, and others, although they copy the words of Junius, seem to have had some particular reasons for not adopting his opinion respecting the pretended productions

⁹ Non eo, qui hodiè usitatus est, modo, typis scilicet ex plumbo et stanno arte fusoria factis ; primum hæc ars tractata est ; sed liber imprimendus per partes sive folia tabulis ligneis incidebatur.—*Wolfii Monumenta Typographica*, vol. i. page 403.

¹⁰ Res enim aliter habet, et Junius accuratius ad hæc attendere debebat, si ad manum ipsi fuit *Speculum* : sin minus relata sunt viro nobilissimo falsa ; atque adeo plures meo quidem judicio, magis inscii quam conscii, in errorem perducti sunt.—*Wolfi*. vol. i. page 416.

of Coster. In fact, we cannot but praise the moderation of these celebrated authors, who, in simply quoting in their writings the narrative of Junius, have not endeavoured to increase the ridicule by any new hearsays of certain aged persons, by the discovery of any old parchment, or by fortunately stumbling upon some remarkable passage of an imaginary chronicle, deposited in the corner of some old library;¹¹ for certainly these authors had as much right as Junius or Scaliger to flatter their countrymen by inventions of this kind.

XVI. Let us now examine the facts related in the before-mentioned work of Mr. Meerman, and let us see, if his interpretations and conjectures are

¹¹ It is thus that Richard Atkyns, a learned Englishman, astonished, without doubt, at the singular effect produced in the republic of letters by the narrative of Junius, and at the facility with which every thing, that authors of repute ventured to advance, was adopted without examination, imagined, after the example of Junius, a little history in favour of his own country, nearly in the same taste as his model, and which may serve as a sequel to it. As in this fiction, Atkyns derives the history of printing in England, from that of Harlem, Mr. Meerman has not failed to exert all his ingenuity to cause it to be regarded as true, notwithstanding, that the learned Dr. Middleton, had proved by the clearest evidence, that the document produced by Atkyns was nothing but a fiction.

any better founded. This celebrated author has taken such pains, and has made such efforts, to obtain belief for the narrative of Junius, that, by force of hypotheses, inductions, and numerous assertions purely gratuitous, and without the least proof, he has formed, in favour of Harlem, a typographical system, of which no person before him had been aware, very ingenious certainly, but which has not even the merit of probability. The following is the manner in which he interprets, or rather arranges, at his pleasure, the tale of Junius.

XVII. First then, according to Mr. Meerman, there is no doubt, that Junius, Scriverius, and all those who have followed these authors, have been strangely mistaken in saying that Laurence Coster, of whom they speak, (or *Koster*, a Flemish word, signifying sacristan or churchwarden,) derived his origin from the family of the *Costers*, so named from having always held, by hereditary right, the then honourable office of warden of the cathedral;¹² since this surname of Coster, says he, is not to be

¹² “Ex premissis colligere est quam graviter lapsi fuerint Junius, eumque secuti Scriverius ceterique ad unum omnes, qui Laurentii originem è familia Costerorum repetunt nomen hoc adepta ex munere æditui belgicè *Coster* quod hereditario jure possederit.”—*Orig. Typog. vol. i. p. 48.*

found in any ancient charter, nor even in the public registers of the town of Harlem,—“gentilitium, dignissimi viri nomen, neque in veteribus chartis, neque in fastis Harlemensibus reperire est.”—*Orig. Typ. vol. i. p. 38.* It is then very probable, that the said Laurence Coster is only an imaginary person, who has never existed, except in the tale of Junius and those writers who have copied him; since, as appears from the avowal of Mr. Meerman, this surname is not to be found in any contemporary document.¹³ It is true, indeed, that Mr. Meerman afterwards adds, that our proto-typographer in question is only simply designated, in these ancient records, by the name of Laurence, son of John,—“simpliciter illic Laurentius Joannis filius audit.” But who could tell Mr. Meerman, that the person, whom, he says, he found designated under the

¹³ It is worthy of remark, that notwithstanding the duty of churchwarden was discharged by one named Berthod, in 1330, and by Henry de Lunen, in 1396 and 1397; and notwithstanding that, in the records, no churchwarden, bearing the name of Laurentius Johannis filius, is to be found, Mr. Meerman always believes that he performed the duties of this office:—“Probabile vero est, non diu post comitis largitionem (an. 1398), munus illud a magistratu in Laurentium nostrum collatum fuisse, indeque appellationem *Coster* a vulgo ipsi tributam.”—*Orig. Typ. vol. i. p. 49.*

name of *Louwerys Janssoen*, or *Laurentius Joannis filius*, in a charter of the year 1408, as an accomplice in a seditious offence, and afterwards, in the records, as treasurer in 1434, is the person named in the narrative of Junius, as exercising the office of churchwarden? Where is the proof of this? Ought we to receive the suppositions of Mr. Meerman as incontrovertible truths? But this is not all; for, by a heap of such hypotheses, in a chapter written expressly upon the feigned genealogy of this *Laurentius Johannis*, Mr. Meerman makes his hero to be descended from the illustrious house of Brederode, and consequently from the ancient Counts of Holland.¹⁴ We need not, therefore, be any longer surprised at the boldness of those genealogists, who, by similar conjectures, have derived the origin of certain families from times anterior to the Flood.¹⁵

¹⁴ If to this ridiculous genealogy we also add the history of the fine portrait of Coster, which Mr. Meerman has placed at the head of his work, and which will be noticed hereafter, we shall feel greatly surprised, that a man, so distinguished for learning, should have seriously busied himself about things fit only for a romance.

¹⁵ I remember to have seen, in an ancient monastery, the genealogy of a house of Belgium that commenced with Adam!

XVIII. After this beginning, which appears better adapted for the refutation than the support of his system, Mr. Meerman proceeds to examine the facts detailed in the narrative of Junius. It is there stated, upon the evidence of old Cornelius, that Coster, during his walks to the wood near Harlem, cut or formed letters with the bark of the beech tree, with which he tried to print upon paper some short verses or sentences, for the instruction of his grand-children. Upon this passage, Mr. Meerman acknowledges, that letters of bark could not be used in printing, and thinks that we ought to read letters of wood, instead of bark. Here is thus, at the outset, a very remarkable variation substituted by Mr. Meerman; and we must, therefore, believe, that old Cornelius had either seen imperfectly, or ill understood what he had heard. I say seen imperfectly, or ill understood, for he does not say, whether he himself had, by accident, met his future master in the wood of Harlem, whilst he was occupied in forming letters of the bark of trees; or whether his master had afterwards amused himself, during the long nights of winter, by relating, by the fireside, to his domestics, these curious details. However this may be, this historico-prototypographical fact may be classed with the sleep of

Coster, invented by Scriverius, which has already been mentioned.

XIX. As nothing is impossible to the researches of Mr. Meerman, he discovers the first typographical essays of Coster; namely, the verses or sentences, of which we have just spoken, printed with letters of bark or wood. He discovers them, three centuries after they were printed, in a sheet of vellum, printed on both sides (*opistographe*) in Gothic letters. The sheet was found by Mr. Enschede, a printer and bookseller, pasted on an old prayer-book, and contained in 8 pages, 16mo. the alphabet, the Lord's prayer, &c. &c. This little piece, similar to a hundred other little books of devotion, printed at divers places in the Netherlands towards the end of the 15th century, not having any date, nor even the name of the place or the printer, was precisely what Mr. Meerman wanted, to be enabled to prove with certainty, that this identical sheet was the first typographical essay of Coster. He then, by various calculations, which he makes in his usual way, decides, with an air of authority, that this pretended essay was printed about the year 1430;—it is a wonder that he did not fix the precise hour and day when it was finished. It must be confessed, that by similar means, it would be very

easy to fix the origin of printing at any time and place that might be wished.

XX. Indeed, if frivolous conjectures are to supply the place of facts, wherefore might not I also assert, and even with more appearance of probability than Mr. Meerman, that this book, as well as many others similar to it, which it would be easy to name, was printed at Bruges, or more probably at Antwerp? Since it is evident, not from hearsays or fictitious narratives, but from authentic documents, that there were incorporated companies of scribes, illuminators, "*printers*," binders, &c. in these cities, before the middle of the 15th century, which it is certain was not the case at Harlem. Is it not, therefore, more probable, and much more natural, to believe, that the celebrated Flemish *Speculum*, so highly boasted of by Mr. Meerman, is the work of these "*printers*" (or engravers of rude figures and images of saints upon wood), rather than of the imaginary Coster? Undoubtedly: but this is only supposition, and can be of no authority as proof of a historical fact.

XXI. In short, we may rest assured, that this sheet of vellum, the pretended essay of Coster, whatever Mr. Meerman may say to the contrary, was printed with letters which had been

cast;¹⁶ and I am even persuaded, that, so far from having been executed about the year 1430, it is not earlier than the year 1480; the want of signatures, folios, and catchwords, so much relied on to prove its antiquity, being common to some thousand other editions of the 15th century. Besides, it really appears ridiculous to expect such typographical marks in a single sheet. Mr. Meerman, however, takes such an interest in supporting the romantic narrative of Junius, that he is desirous his paradoxes should be received as proofs: his enthusiasm wishes to make us perceive in his favourite Coster, an extraordinary artist, who, contrary to the natural order of discovery in art, begins his pretended essay, by printing, with separate types, a book printed on both sides of the leaf,—next retrogrades towards elementary ideas,—and finishes,

¹⁶ Notwithstanding the express testimony of Junius, who attributes the invention and use of separate metal types to Coster, Mr. Meerman, pretends that all the works printed by him, were executed with separate wooden types only: “Prototypographum nostrum ante epocham Moguntinam vivis ereptum, sejunctis literis non ex metallo, verum ligno usum fuisse consequens erit.”—*Orig. Typ. vol. i, page 81*. It is really curious to find Mr. Meerman so often opposed to the narrative of Junius, whilst this narrative is the sole support of his whole system.

where the art should have begun, by printing the *Speculum humanæ Salvationis*, the *Figuræ Biblicæ*, and other works of this kind, which are printed on one side of the leaf only, and which Mr. Meerman attributes, without foundation, to his pretended prototypographer.

XXII. I say without foundation, for Baron Heineken has since clearly proved, that all these books, with images engraved on wood, were engraved and printed in Germany: we may consult on this head the work entitled, *Idée générale d'une Collection complète d'Estampes; Leipsic, 1771, 8vo.* in which will be found a very detailed account of the *Speculum humanæ Salvationis*,—a book, which the tale of Junius and the pretensions of Harlem have rendered celebrated.¹⁷ In this work

¹⁷ A copy of the Flemish edition of this *Speculum*, having fallen into the hands of Junius, nothing more was wanting to enable him to attribute the execution of it to his protégé Coster; which he did with so much the more earnestness, as it came very opportunely to support his narrative, and as no person could challenge, with certainty, a book, destitute of every mark, which could in the least indicate the place, or date, of its execution. Mr. Meerman, whose typographical system is entirely built upon this narrative of Junius, takes infinite pains to induce us to believe, that this Flemish edition, which is, however, only a translation of the Latin one, was the first

of Baron Heineken, it is clearly shewn, that there are two editions of the *Speculum*, in Latin, without a date; another in Latin and German, printed at

edition. He asserts that it was executed by Laurence Coster, and pretends, in consequence, that it was printed with separate wooden characters.* But it has been proved by all the bibliographers of the present day, that this position of Mr Meerman is untenable,—that the Flemish edition was printed with metal types,—and that so far from its being attributable to Coster, it is even later than the first works printed at Mentz;—nay more, there is great reason to believe that it is not earlier than the year 1470, since the Latin edition, which, whatever Mr. Meerman may say to the contrary, will always be regarded by all enlightened bibliographers as the first edition, is itself partly printed with metal types; and it cannot be referred to a much earlier date, for it is in fact one of the latest editions of this kind of books of images. Besides, supposing for an instant with Mr Meerman, that the Flemish edition of the *Speculum* is the earliest, how is it certain that it was printed by Coster? Where is the proof of this? Is it because it is in the Flemish language?—But have we not a great number of works, in the Flemish language, printed in the 15th century at Gouda, Utrecht, Louvain, Antwerp, and other places, in the Low Countries, by celebrated printers? Why, then, is this book to be attributed in preference to Coster, that is, to an unknown person, whom not any writer has mentioned till more than a century after his existence, if it be true that he ever did exist?

* See on this subject his letter to Mr. Wagenaar, given before in note 3, and it will appear that Mr. Meerman is here speaking contrary to his own conviction.

Augsburg, in 1471 ; many editions in German, some without date, and others with the dates of 1476, 1492, and 1500 ; two editions in the Flemish language without a date, and a third one printed by J. Veldener, in 1483 ; and that there are others

Again, perhaps, it will be said, that this is a work with figures and images engraved on wood ; this is very true,—but without repeating what has been said above in the text, respecting the engravers of these images established at Bruges and Antwerp, before the middle of the fifteenth century, were there not works of this kind printed at Louvain, Utrecht, and other places, by the celebrated John Veldener ? Every sensible and impartial person will, I think, see much more reason to attribute the printing of this *Speculum* to the latter artist, who, in 1483, printed a little work of the same kind, containing a history of the holy cross, in 65 vignettes engraved on wood ; and the probability, that it was printed by him, is strengthened by the fact, that this same Veldener also reprinted in the said year, 1483, the very *Speculum* of which we are speaking, with the same wooden blocks, as had been used in the preceding editions, after having sawn them in two to adapt them to the 4to. page of this new edition. I am well aware, that Mr. Meerman ingeniously answers these arguments, by saying, that these very blocks, which he pretends were engraved by Coster at Harlem, were afterwards bought by Veldener ; but this is merely one of his gratuitous suppositions, and a subterfuge of which he has availed himself more than once. I am well persuaded, that if all these works of Veldener had not borne the name of their printer, Mr. Meerman would not have failed to attribute them to Coster.

in French, as well as many ancient manuscript ones preserved in the libraries of the cities, universities, and monasteries of Germany.

XXIII. But let us continue the examination of the narrative of Junius, and of Mr. Meerman's commentary upon it; and overlooking all that we have read respecting the discovery of a more glutinous ink and of metal types, as well as the circumstance of the wine cups afterwards made out of their feigned remains, let us now take a view of the principal incident in this celebrated prototypographical fable.

XXIV. It is stated, in the narrative of Junius, that John Fust, father-in-law of the celebrated Schoeffer, of whom mention will be made more than once in the sequel of this work, was suspected of being the author of the alleged robbery of the types and implements of the too famous printing office of Coster; but as the partisans of the claim of Harlem, notwithstanding the authority of Junius, found it very difficult, not to say impossible, to cause it to be believed, that so rich a man as Fust should ever have been the domestic servant of a churchwarden of Harlem, and that he should have robbed his master, they have endeavoured to throw the suspicion upon the true inventor of printing,

John Gaensfleisch, called Guttenberg, whom Scri-verius has the impudence to accuse of this theft.

—*Laurecrans, cap. x. in fine.*

XXV. Finding it impossible, however, to make this false assertion of Scriverius agree with the authentic documents, discovered by the learned Schoepflin, and published in his *Vindiciæ Typographicæ*, (which documents, by the bye, are quite of a different character from all the hearsays of Junius and the hypotheses of his commentators, and from which, it is certain, that John Guttenberg was settled at Strasburgh, from about the year 1430, and that he continued living there in 1444,) Mr. Meerman has had recourse to his inventive faculty, which readily suggested to him an easy means of embellishing the narrative of Junius, and turning it into a finished romance.

XXVI. He assures us then, as of a positive and incontrovertible truth, that the person bearing the name of John, who was guilty of the alleged robbery, could be no other than John Gaensfleisch, senior,¹³ a native of Mentz, and brother of John Guttenberg; who, although he was descended from

¹³ John Meidenbach, John Petersheim, John Fust, John Guttenberg, John Gaensfleisch, &c. &c. all of whom were artists well known about the era of the invention of printing,

a noble family, was yet obliged, from his want of fortune, to quit his native country, and to seek, like

have furnished Mr. Meerman with an excellent opportunity of choosing, at his pleasure, amongst these Johns, the pretended robber of Coster; but he is disappointed in his expectations, and all his hypotheses only render his pretensions more visionary. For, deceived by the errors which have been committed by Kohler, in his apology for Guttenberg (*Ehren-rettung Guttenberg's*), Mr. Meerman makes, of one and the same person, two brothers, and both of them printers; whilst it is certain, that there never was any other Gaensfleisch a printer, than *John Gaensfleisch de Sulgeloch*, called *zum Guttenberg*, the inventor of printing; the same who, in 1443, hired the house at Mentz called *Zum Jungen*,—and who was not so poor, as Mr. Meerman would wish us to believe (*see note 39*). If he is ever found designated under the name of Guttenberg, *senior*, it is only after the death of his uncle, and with reference to his cousin, that he is so called; as is thus shewn by Mr. Fischer, in his *Essai sur les Monumens Typographiques de Gutenberg*, at page 33:

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| 1. Friele zum Gaensfleisch, living at Elfeld in 1431 and 1432. | 1. Henne Gaensfleisch, the elder, who died after 1440. |
| 2. Elsechin, his wife, daughter of Jeckel Hirz, 1431. | 2. Kettgin, his wife. |
| 3. Henne Gaensfleisch, de Sulgeloch, called zum Guttenberg. | 3. Henne Gaensfleisch, his son. |

It was, therefore, only after the death of his uncle, Henne Gaensfleisch, senior, that Henne Gaensfleisch de Sulgeloch, called zum Guttenberg, became the elder.

his brother, the means of subsistence by his labour and industry: "Extra dubium mihi visum est, infidum hunc famulum fuisse ipsum Joannem Gaensfleisch seniore, ortu Moguntinum . . . hic enim, nobilis licet genere, attamen pauper, fratris ad exemplum victum extra patriam quæsivisse videtur."—*Origines Typog. vol. i, pages 90 and 91.* He adds, that this same Gaensfleisch, *senior*, having heard of the establishment of printing at Harlem, went thither in consequence, and entered into the service of the sacristan Laurence, with the intent of acquiring a knowledge of an art, at that time almost unknown, and from which he hoped, on his return to his native country, to derive very great advantages:¹⁹—That it was under these circumstances, and about the year 1435, (for Mr. Meerman knows every thing, even to the most minute details of facts, buried under the obscurity

¹⁹ "Senior, postquam de typographeio Harlemensi aliquid rescivisset, illi se ut ministrum tradidit, hoc animo, ut incognitam hucusque artem edoctus uberrimos exinde in patriâ fructus colligeret."—*Orig. Typ. vol. i. pages 174, 175.* It is a fact then, according to Mr. Meerman, that, in 1434 and 1435, it was already known at Mentz, that a printing-office existed at Harlem. I do not believe that he will find any one so credulous as to believe this.

of many centuries,) that John Guttenberg, having come, for purposes of trade, to the fair of Aix-la-Chapelle, determined to pay a visit to his pretended brother, the servant of the sacristan Coster, in the city of Harlem; in this place he was himself initiated into the knowledge of the art of printing, which he afterwards practised in the city of Strasburg:²⁰—That, about the year 1440, the said John Gaensfleisch, the servant of Coster, having stolen, during mass on the night of Christmas-eve, all the types and printing implements belonging to his master,¹ betook himself, laden with these spoils,

²⁰ “Verosimile ergo est, Jo. Gaensfleischium juniorem, sive Gutenbergium, qui nundinas Aquisgranenses questûs gratiâ frequentare erat solitus, non longè dissitum ab hâc urbe Belgium circa ann. 1435 adiisse, fratremque suum Laurentii ministrum cominus salutasse, à quo ex artis secretis nonnulla hausit, atque Argentorati in usum convertere studuit suos.”—*Orig. Typ. vol. i. page 198.* We have seen above (note 18), that Mr. Meerman has made of one person, two brothers; we now find that this was absolutely necessary for him, in order to derive, from his pretended typography of Harlem, that of Mentz by Gaensfleisch, *senior*, and that of Strasburg by Gaensfleisch, *juniior*. It may be seen by note 11, that he is also desirous of giving the same origin to the typography of England, by means of the fable of Atkins. Unfortunate Coster, robbed and cheated on all sides!

²¹ It is stated in the narrative of Junius, that the thief

to Mentz, his native city, where about the year 1442, he printed with the wooden types, stolen from Harlem, two little works entitled, *Alex. Galli Doctrinale*, and *Petri Hispani Tractatus*:²²—That

carried away all the typographical implements of his master: “Choragium omne typorum involat, instrumentorum herilium ei artificio comparatorum supellectilem convasat,” &c. In answer to the very just observations, which some sensible persons have made, upon this passage, with regard to the difficulty of being able to carry off, on such a night as that of Christmas-eve, when every body was a stir, a mass of materials sufficient for the load of a waggon, Mr. Meerman, the faithful organ of the thoughts of Junius, replies, that this author has here only spoken figuratively, in order to make the heinous nature of the crime more evident; for, adds he, the thief being already instructed in the art of printing, required only a few wooden types, which might serve him as models.—*Orig. Typ. vol. i. page 87.*—But if this was the case, what occasion had this faithless servant to make choice of the night of Christmas-eve? And if he took away only a few types, how could this alleged robbery be perceived even, from amongst the great number of types required in a printing-office? Besides what occasion had he to carry away any at all? For if, as Mr. Meerman says, this expert servant was able to retain, in his memory, the shape of all the parts of the press and of the other implements of the printing-office, so perfectly as to be afterwards able to make them, it would have been much more easy for him to remember the form of the types also.

²² What has become of these celebrated little works, printed with the wooden types, stolen from the work-shop of Coster?

Gaensfleisch, having perceived the imperfect nature of wooden types, formed the design of replacing them by metal ones; but as the making of these required a great deal of time and expense, he, in the mean time, made a profitable use of his time by printing with wooden blocks different works, such as *Donati Grammatica*, *Tabula Alphabetica*, the *Catholicon*, *Confessionalia*, &c.—And that at last, about the year 1450, after many difficulties, and with the help of his partners, Guttenberg, Meidenbach, Fust, and others,²³ he printed, with metal types, the famous Latin Bible, the subject of a long discussion amongst bibliographers.

XXVII. It is in this manner that Mr. Meerman explains to us the romantic origin of the famous printing-office of Laurence Coster, and with

Let one copy of them at least be produced. In answer to this demand, Mr. Meerman says, that having been printed for the particular use of schools, the copies of them have been destroyed, from their having been constantly in use.—*Orig. Typ. vol. i. page 94.* But if Mr. Meerman has not seen any of these feigned editions, how dare he assert, that they were printed with separate wooden types?

²³ This typographical partnership is quite different from that which will be noticed hereafter. This is a partnership of Mr. Meerman's own invention, respecting which no person before him has said one word.—*Orig. Typ. vol. i. pages 149—152.*

the aid of hypotheses and conjectures, comments, at his pleasure, upon the fabulous narrative of Junius. I think, that that most skilful romance writer, the author of *Don Quixote*, supported by all the documents of Cid Hamet Ben Engeli, could not have succeeded so adroitly as Mr. Meerman, in the composition and denouement of his typographical romance, which owes its origin entirely to an extravagant desire to promote the glory of his country.

XXVIII. Now if we examine all the authors, without exception, who have written in favour of the city of Harlem, we shall not find in their writings, the least proof, the slightest contemporary document in support of their pretensions; every thing that they have written, every thing that they have alleged, is reducible to the narrative of Hadrian Junius,—composed itself from hearsays, and upon which each writer comments according to the dictates of his fancy. And, it is upon the sole authority of this narrative of Junius, that it has been thought fit to strike medals, to carve inscriptions, and to erect statues and other monuments to the glory of the immortal and incomparable prototypographer, Laurence Janssoen,—who is at one time represented as a disturber of the public

peace, and condemned as such,—at another, as a sacristan or church-warden,—afterwards as consul,—then as a treasurer,—and lastly, is described as an illustrious scion of the House of Brederode, a descendant, in a right line, from the ancient sovereigns of Holland.²⁴

XXIX. Carried away by their patriotism, some writers of Holland have employed all the means in their power, to cause this great personage to be regarded not only as the father of printing, but also as the inventor of engraving on wood;—an

²⁴ A very long time after the publication of Junius's work, the consular body of the city of Harlem, caused the following inscription to be placed upon the front of the house, which it was pretended had been inhabited by Laurence Coster :

MEMORIE SACRUM
T Y P O G R A P H I A
ARS ARTIUM OMNIUM
CONSERVATRIX
HIC PRIMUM INVENTA
CIRCA ANNUM CIO CCCCXL.

After Peter Scriverius, whom we have already mentioned, had published his *Laurecrans*, in which he fixes, according to his own fancy, the era of the discovery of printing at Harlem, in the year 1428, the last line of this inscription was erased and there was substituted for it the date of M. CCCC. XXIIX.

insupportable pretension, possessing less foundation even than the former.

In 1722, the medical college of Harlem erected a statue of stone to the prototypographer Coster, with this inscription :—

AE. M. S.
LAURENTIO COSTERO
HARLEMENSI
VIRO CONSULARI
TYPOGRAPHIE
INVENTORI VERO
MONUMENTUM HOC
EREGI CURAVIT
COLLEGIUM MEDICUM
ANNO. CIO IO CCXXII.

I shall pass silently over the other monuments, as also the six medals, struck in the year 1740, in honour of this ridiculous hero of printing: of these medals the description and figures may be seen in the extravagant work of John-Christ. Seiz, entitled, *Derde Jubel-jaar*, pages 106 et seq.; and I shall conclude this note with the history of the portrait of Coster which figures at the beginning of Mr. Meerman's work. Mr. Enschede, a bookseller and printer at Harlem, having bought at an auction, in the year 1724, an old picture, moderately well painted, forthwith took it into his head that it must be the portrait of the celebrated Coster, painted from life. Nothing more was wanting to kindle the patriotic ardour of Mr. Meerman, to whom this idea of Mr. Enschede appeared quite charming. It nevertheless struck him, after a particular

XXX. For if there had existed in the city of Harlem, an engraver in wood, such as they wish to make us believe did exist in the person of the said Coster, we should certainly find some account of him in the work of Carel Van Mander,²⁵ a painter and engraver, who was living, about the year 1583,

examination of the old portraits painted in that country, that this identical portrait could not possibly be of so remote a date; but this circumstance is of no consequence,—for if the copy, says he, be exact, it deserves to have as much dependence placed upon it as the original: “Copia verò si fuerit accurata picturæ originalis, eandem profecto fidem mereatur oportet.”—*Orig. Typ. vol. i. page 53 and note at.* Consequently, with as much certainty and assurance, as if the portrait was incontestably genuine, he causes it to be engraved by Houbraken, a very skilful artist, and places it as the frontispiece of his *Origines Typographicæ*, after having added to it the fictitious coat of arms of his hero, accompanied with this boasting inscription:

LAURENTIUS JOHAN. FIL.

SCABINUS HARLEMENSIS,

TYPOGRAPHIÆ INVENTOR.

Bravo! bravissimo!

²⁵ Charles Van Mander, or Vermander, was born at Meulebeecke, a village in Flanders, within the seignory of Courtray, in 1548; he was settled at Harlem in 1583, and went from thence in 1604, to Amsterdam, where he died on the 11th. of September, 1606, aged 58 years.

in the city of Harlem. Here he composed his History of the Lives of Painters and Engravers, published in 1603; and it cannot be doubted, that for this work, he would make the most diligent enquiries, particularly after every thing connected with the history of the Flemish and Dutch artists. Indeed nothing appears more natural than to expect to find, in a work of this nature, a precise and detailed account of an artist so remarkable as Laurence Coster, if he really had been the inventor of engraving upon wood; in the glory arising from which, the city of Harlem, where he had fixed his establishment, was so materially interested. Yet the name of the famous Laurence Coster does not once appear therein, neither as a printer nor an engraver, nor under any other denomination whatever; although twenty years had elapsed since the publication of the *Batavia* of Junius, and since the history of Coster had been known by heart to all the inhabitants of Harlem. The reason of this omission, it is not difficult to divine: Charles Van Mander, being well aware, that historical facts, founded upon conjectures, and advanced on the authority of hearsays only, are quite undeserving of belief, did not think it right to allow a tale of this nature, however agreeable it

might have been to his fellow citizens, to find its way into his work.²⁶

XXXI. The art of engraving on wood, for printing, which most probably owes its origin to the makers of playing cards, was discovered in Germany, as has been already mentioned (art. XXI.); it is from thence that we derive the *Biblia Pauperum*, the *Speculum humanæ Salvationis*, the *Ars Moriendi*, the *Historia Apocalypsis*, the *Ars Memorandi*, the *Historia Virginis ex Cantico Canticorum*, and many other ancient books of images printed from wooden blocks, which are

²⁶ If C. Van Mander has not made any mention of Laurence Coster, it can only be because he regarded him as an imaginary person. This author was acquainted with every thing that Junius had related respecting him; he knew very well the pretensions of Harlem, for he speaks of them in his work, but in such a manner as evinces very clearly, that he did not consider them as well founded. For in speaking of printing, he says, “daer Haarlem met genoech bescheyt, haer vermaet den roem van d’eerste vindinge te hebben”—that is, of which Harlem, with *much presumption*, arrogates to itself the honour of the first invention. James de Jongh, in his new edition of Van Mander’s work, published in 1764, makes no scruple of thus changing this passage—“waar van Haarlem zich, op genoegzamen grond, den roem der eerste vinding toeschrijft;” that is, of which Harlem, with *much reason*, attributes to itself the glory of the invention. *Tantus amor patriæ!*

commonly considered as the first essays of the art of printing, and which Mr. Meerman, without the least proof or appearance of probability, attributes to his sacristan or churchwarden of Harlem. From Germany, this art was afterwards communicated to the neighbouring countries, and especially to Belgium.²⁷

XXXII. The great number of works of this description, which are daily discovered, in the greater part of the important libraries, both public and private, belonging to the universities, cities,

²⁷ It has been shown above (art. xx.), that before the middle of the fifteenth century, there existed in the city of Antwerp a corporation, part of the members of which, were engravers of wooden images and printers (*houtc beeltsnyders, printers.*) The late Abbé de Marolles, well known for his taste in the fine arts, as well as for his rich and valuable collection of prints, possessed one engraved on wood, bearing this inscription, also engraved upon it, *Gheprint t'Antwerpen, by my Philery, de figursnyder*, that is, *printed at Antwerp, by me Philery, engraver of images*. This Philery was, without doubt, a member of the said corporation; he was, however, at any rate, an engraver of images at Antwerp;—is it not, therefore, more probable, that he, rather than the sacristan of Harlem, was the author of the Flemish *Speculum*? But however this may be, Mr. Meerman, notwithstanding all his researches, has not been able to produce one single similar image which has issued from the pretended office of Coster.

monasteries, and illustrious persons of Germany, furnish unequivocal proofs, that this art was discovered there, and uninterruptedly exercised from the time of its invention to the beginning of the sixteenth century. Baron Heineken, an enlightened amateur, found in the Cistercian monastery of Buxheim, near Memmingen, a very curious and interesting wood engraving, representing the image of St. Christopher, beneath which are the following words, engraved and printed along with the image: *Cristoferi faciem die quâcunque tueris. Illa nempe die, morte malâ non morieris. Millesimo CCCC.º XX.º tertio.*²⁸

XXXIII. This remarkable print clearly shews us, that, in the year 1423, the engraving of letters and images, upon wood, was practised in Germany. It is at least a proof, a document, of quite another description than the hearsays, reports, and hypotheses, contained in the romantic narrative of Junius and the commentary of Mr. Meerman.

XXXIV. It is certain that the partisans of the

²⁸ A copy of this print, taken with the greatest exactness from the original, may be seen in the Journal of Mr. Murr, printed at Nuremberg, vol. ii. page 104. [This very curious print is now in the possession of Earl Spencer; and a fac-simile of it is given in that splendid publication, *Bibliotheca Spenceriana*, vol. i. page ii.]

claim of Harlem, notwithstanding their great and laborious researches, have not been able to produce, even at the present moment, any thing to be put in competition with this print. Not a passage, not a word, which can be adduced in support of their pretension, is to be found in the writings of any of the illustrious authors, who, during the fifteenth century, enriched, in so remarkable a manner, the literature of Holland. This circumstance apparently confirms the deeply rooted opinion, that Laurence Janssoen Coster is merely a fictitious personage, created by the pen of Junius.

XXXV. To supply the want of proofs, the partisans of Coster have had recourse to the editions printed in the fifteenth century, of which there are a great number, without any date or indication of the place or name of the printer. Some authors have discovered, in these ancient editions, very convenient proofs for supporting their claims to the origin and invention of printing, an honour, which each has been particularly anxious to confer upon his own native country. Mr. Meerman, following this example, has not failed to take advantage of so easy a means of establishing his typographical system, and of thus securing, to the city of Harlem, the honour of the invention.

XXXVI. In fact, after having adopted all kinds of hypotheses and conjectures, Mr. Meerman has recourse for his proofs to the *Speculum humanæ Salvationis*, which has been before mentioned, particularly in art. XXII. and in note 17. He also takes advantage of many other books without a date, and without any indication of the name of their printer, or of the place where they were executed, and arbitrarily attributes them to his hero Laurence Coster, of Harlem. But this is not all, for after the example of John-Christ. Seiz, in his celebrated work entitled, *Het Derde Jubel-jaar der Boeck-druk-konst*, Mr. Meerman ranges, in chronological order, according to the dictates of his fancy, all these editions, as if they had been really printed by Coster, between the years 1430 and 1448; and he does this with such an air of certainty, that one would really suppose, that the date could be found marked upon them, in legible characters, by the printer himself.²⁹

²⁹ John-Christ. Seiz, in the seventh chapter of his *Derde Jubel-jaar der Boeck-druk-konst*, gives the following chronological list of the works pretended to be printed by Coster, whose life he prolongs till 1467:—The *Ars Moriendi*, printed in 1431; the *Historia veteris et novi Testamenti*, in 1432 the *Canticum Cantorum*, in 1433; the *Apocalypsis*, in 1434; the *Donatus*, in 1435;

XXXVII. In a similar manner, Mr. Meerman has also made, in his typographical reveries, an important discovery, which had been concealed, during three centuries, from all his predecessors:—

the *Speculum humane Salvationis*, in the Flemish language, in 1439; the second edition of it, in 1443; the Latin edition, in 1444, &c. &c. so that if the printer had himself fixed the dates of them, we could not have expected a greater precision. Mr. Meerman remarks upon this subject, with a good deal of reason, that Seiz has drawn from his imagination an absurd chronology of the works of Coster: “Nostra ætate Jo.-Christ. Seizius integram et perquam absurdam operum Laurentianorum chronologiam è cerebro suo contexuit.”—*Orig. Typ. vol. i. page 245, note cr.* But he has failed to perceive, that the chronology, which he has himself forged, exceeds, perhaps, even that of Seiz, in ridicule and extravagance; for he commences the list of the works of Coster, by an *Horarium*, which, he says, was printed about the year 1430; the *Donatus*, the Flemish *Speculum*, and a second *Donatus* follow; all of which were printed with separate wooden types. Then from a caprice, contrary to the natural order of invention in the arts, the great Coster, abandoning the use of separate types, printed, with engraved wooden blocks, the *Canticum Canticorum*, *Ars Moriendi*, *Apocalypsis*, &c. &c. which works were printed in succession between the years 1430 and 1440, the era, according to Mr. Meerman, of Coster's death. I shall now ask, which of these two typographical chronologies is the best, or rather which is the most ridiculous and extravagant? It is really surprising, that men distinguished for their learning and knowledge, could seriously occupy themselves with such absurdities.

he has discovered, that the original printing-office of Coster, which he calls the Laurentian Office, did not cease to be in activity after the death of its founder, which took place about the year 1440; for according to him, from that period even till the year 1472, the descendants of Coster, the sons of his son-in-law Thomas, namely, Peter, Andrew, and Thomas, continued the exercise of the art of printing, and executed a great number of books, notwithstanding the misfortune of having been robbed, about the year 1459, (a fatality attached to this establishment,) by an unfaithful servant named Frederic Corsellis, who had been bribed by the Court of England, to which country he carried the knowledge of printing.³⁰ By this important discovery of Mr. Meerman, which completes his system, the city of Harlem, of which the most ancient known impression, with a date, is only of the year 1484, at once acquires the glory of having given birth to printing, and of having seen this art exercised within its walls, from the year 1430 until the present time.³¹

³⁰ See note 11.

³¹ After this it is not surprising to find Mr. Meerman dissatisfied with what Scriverius and other writers have stated, —that the great Coster, mortified at having been robbed, had

XXXVIII. If we examine the proofs, to which Mr. Meerman has had recourse, in order to establish the existence of the imaginary office of the descendants of the pretended Coster, we shall find that it is always the ancient editions, without date and without notice of the name of the printer, of which he avails himself; these are his constant resort, and the only means he employs to give weight to his ridiculous fancies. After having arbitrarily attributed to this fictitious printing-office the Latin editions of the famous *Speculum*, and that which he calls the second Flemish edition, because they appeared to him too modern to be assigned to Coster, he adds, that his descendants afterwards changed the form of their characters, causing more beautiful ones to be cut, with which they printed, in folio, the *Historia Alexandri de Præliis*, *Flavii Renati Epitoma de Re Militari*, *B. Hieronymi Liber de Viris illustribus*, and *Thomæ à Kempis Opera varia*.³²

given up his printing-office: “Nollem itaque Scriverio nostro, nollem aliis excidisset, furtum officinæ suæ illatum tantum injecisse mœrorem Laurentio ut officinam suam mox habuerit pro derelicto.”—*Orig. Typ. vol. i. page 134.*

³² “Officina Laurentiana, rejecto typi genere, quod *Speculo* inservierat, alio deinde ad varia opera uti cœpit. Huic quippe

XXXIX. These works, executed with truly extraordinary characters, which have not the least resemblance to those of any other known artist of the 15th. century, and destitute, besides, of all marks indicative of the place where they were printed, and the name of their printer, have furnished Mr. Meerman with a very simple and very easy means of asserting, with his usual tone of assurance, as if the thing were indisputable, that the characters, used in these works, were cut singly, (Mr. Meerman is the only one who maintains this paradox, because his system requires it also,) and that all these publications issued from the before-unheard of office of the pretended descendants of his prototypographer Coster. On the strength of so important a discovery, he has caused a plate to be engraved, on which is represented the exact form of the characters used in these works.—*Orig. Typ. plate vii.*

XL. It is to be regretted, under such circumstances, that Mr. Meerman was unacquainted with the *Sidonii Appollinaris Opera*, *Guidonis de Columna Historia Destructionis Troyæ*, *Defensorium Fidei contra Judeos*, *Claudiani Viri Siculi de* adscribenda editio est *Historia Alexandri Magni de Præliis*, quæ folio minori, sculptoque caractere prodit.”—*Orig. Typ. vol. i. page 144.*

Raptu Proserpinæ Tragædiæ, B. Thomæ Aquinatis de Rege et Regno, Eusebii *Historia Ecclesiastica*, &c. &c. all of them printed with exactly the same characters, and in the same manner, as the editions which he adduces; for in addition to the list of the productions of Coster's successors, he would have been enabled to embellish his work with one plate more. Unfortunately the printing of his *Origines Typographicæ* was already finished,—the plate, representing the form of the characters of the supposed printing-office of the descendants of his hero Coster, was engraved,—the chain of his typographical system was completed,—when there fell into his hands the *Historia scholastica Novi Testamenti*, printed at Utrecht, in 1473, by Nic. Ketelaer and Ger. de Leempt, in folio. He then knew, though too late, that the works, which he had attributed with so much assurance to the pretended office of Coster's successors, had been all printed with the types used by Ketelaer and De Leempt in the above mentioned work.

XLI. This typographical relic most clearly shews, that the so-much boasted office of the descendants of the church-warden of Harlem, unknown for three centuries, and discovered by Mr. Meerman, is, after all, nothing but an ideal creation.

Notwithstanding the evidence of this truth, Mr. Meerman, whose work, as has just been said, was already printed, appears to have been still desirous of supporting his system, in order, probably, that the result of his labours might not be lost; for he decides by a stroke of his pen, and by a subterfuge similar to that which we have already noticed (note 17), that Nic. Ketelaer and Ger. de Leempt, printers, of Utrecht, had become the possessors of the types of the Laurentian Printing-office.³³

³³ The following is the note on this subject, which Mr. Meerman added after his work was printed off; it is inserted at page 8 of the first sheet of the second part of his *Origines Typographicae*.

“Ad cap. vi. *Orig. nostr.* § 8, addi velim, typos, quibus heredes Laurentii Jo. fil. excuderunt *Historiam Alexandri Magni*, et fortè tria alia opera dict. cap. § 7, recensita, posthac in manus pervenisse Nicolai Ketelaer, et Gerardi Leempt, primorum Ultrajecti impressorum; ut pote qui iisdem usi sunt ad *secundam partem Historiæ Scholasticæ, quæ est de Novo Testamento*, editam in Trajecto inferiori 1473, fol. Eodemque caractere etiam alios libros absque anni loci vel impressoris indicio vulgatos videre licuit, qui num officinæ Laurentianæ, an vero his typographis Ultrajectensibus debeantur, definiri vix potest, &c.”

Notwithstanding the difficulty which Mr. Meerman himself appears to have met with, every well-informed bibliographer has decided that all the editions of which he treats, have, without exception, issued from the presses of Nicholas Ketelaer and

XLII. I now leave the judicious reader to judge of the value and importance of the means employed by Mr. Meerman in support of his system; and yet, will it be believed? he has regarded this series of works without a date or the name of the printer, as the finest record of the typography of Harlem! He has even dared to defy any other nation to produce one like it,³⁺ without having paid attention to the fact, that the most miserable hamlet in Germany was enabled to claim these works as her own, and even to add twenty similar lists, supported by far more plausible conjectures than those which he has advanced.

XLIII. It is very singular, if Laurence Coster exercised the art of printing in the city of Harlem, according to Mr. Meerman's system, from the year 1430, when he first discovered it, and if his grand-children and successors, Peter, Andrew, and Thomas, who were not living in 1492, continued the practice of it for more than thirty years after

Gerard de Leempt, and that the pretended Laurentian Office is nothing but a dream.

³⁺ "Atque hæc sylloge diplomatica, quum nulla alia natio ei proferre similem possit, saltem quod ad prima rudiaque artis tentamina, insigne pro inventione artis apud Batavos argumentum præbet."—*Orig. Typ. vol. ii. page 217, note a.*

his death,—it is very singular, I say, that there cannot be produced, from the press of this famous Laurentian Office, one single printed work, nay not even a single sheet, in which the name of the printer and of the place where it was printed are mentioned. That the said Coster, or church-warden of Harlem, should have wished most strictly to guard the secret of his art at the very beginning would be not at all surprising; his interest even would seem to demand such care;—but, after the pretended theft of his types by his workman, the before-named John,—after the secret of his art had been divulged,—and after the publication of the books printed subsequent to the year 1457, in which the honour, arising from the invention of printing, is so emphatically ascribed to Mentz and to its citizens,—that the grand-children and successors of Coster, Peter, Andrew, and Thomas, who lived till 1492, should have persisted in the same conduct, without once naming themselves in any of their pretended editions, and what is more, without shewing any desire to claim for their grandfather the honour of the invention of this art, which they saw attributed to others,—is one of those things which no person of good sense can ever bring themselves to believe.

XLIV. Let us grant then, that the claim of Harlem to this honour is only an idle fancy, to which the fabulous narrative of Junius has given rise,—that the hypotheses and conjectures of his commentators have rendered it even more visionary,—and let us candidly acknowledge that Laurence Coster, an illustrious scion of the house of the ancient Counts of Holland, a turbulent citizen and one punished as such, a consul, a magistrate, a treasurer, and lastly a sacristan or church-warden,³⁵ can only be regarded as the Don Quixote of Mr. Meerman's typographical romance.

XLV. Let us now proceed to the examination of more certain facts, by means of which, without having recourse to hypotheses and conjectures fitter to confuse than to elucidate history, we may expect to be able to fix with greater precision the era of the origin of the typographic art.

XLVI. It appears very certain, that printing owes its existence to the art of engraving on wood. The makers of playing cards, the origin of which is attributed to the 14th. century, were the first to engrave images of saints on wood; to these

³⁵ This strange combination of characters and offices, is made up from those of all the Laurences, having a John for their father, to be found in the ancient charters.

images they afterwards added some short verses and sentences analogous to the subject, as is seen in the print representing St. Christopher, of which mention has already been made in article xxxii.³⁶ As the art advanced, they attempted the composition of historical subjects, with a text or explanation engraved upon the same block of wood; in this manner was formed that class of books of images, known by the name of *Biblia Pauperum*, *Speculum humanæ Salvationis*, *Ars Moriendi*, &c. &c. already noticed.³⁷

XLVII. It is therefore very probable that these books of images, printed from engravings on wood,

³⁶ The great number of impressions from engravings on wood, with short verses or sentences, which Baron de Heineken saw in many monasteries of Germany, of the same form and size as playing cards, that is 3 inches long by 2½ broad, makes it evident that the idea of engraving the images of saints upon wood was derived from the card-makers.—*Idée d'une Collection d'Estampes*, page 249.

³⁷ These books, being executed with blocks of wood engraved in relief, ought not to be regarded as true printed works; they properly belong to the art of engraving; for the letters of these blocks being fixed, and not capable of being separated and arranged at pleasure, as metal types are, could only serve for the printing of one and the same work. It has before been shewn, (note 1,) that this mode of printing was also known to the ancients.

and which are considered as the first attempts at printing, led the way to the discovery of this important art, since nothing more was required than to cut asunder the letters graven in relief on these blocks, or rather to engrave them separately, in order to render them moveable, and thus to allow the printing of such word, sentence, or discourse, as might be wished.

XLVIII. This was accomplished about the year 1438, by John Guttenberg, of Mentz, a very ingenious artist, as is evident from the authentic papers of a law-suit, published for the first time, by Mr. Schoepflin, in his *Vindiciæ Typographicæ*, and republished by Mr. Meerman.—*Origines Typographicæ*, vol. ii. p. 58 et seq.

XLIX. These judicial acts (documents, which we owe to the literary researches of the learned Schoepflin,) apprise us, that John Guttenberg,³⁸ a man of an inventive genius, and constantly occupied with ingenious projects in the mechanical arts, was a native of Mentz; that he was born of noble

³⁸ John Guttenberg is found designated in these acts, under the name of Johannes Gutenberg; Johannes de Moguntia, dictus Gutenberg; Johannes dictus Gensfleisch, alias nuncupatus Gutenberg de Moguntia, Johannes Gensfleisch, junior, dictus Gutenberg; Johannes Gansfleisch, dictus Sulgeloeh, vel Sorgenloeh.

parents, and that he afterwards resided for a very long time in the city of Strasburg, where he acquired the right of citizenship;³⁹ for it is under

³⁹ From a letter, which John Guttenberg wrote to his sister, a nun of St. Claire, in the city of Mentz, it is evident, that, in the year 1424, he was living at Strasburg. As this letter disproves the assertions of Mr. Meerman, respecting the alleged poverty of Guttenberg, as has been noticed in article xxvi. I think it will not be foreign to my present purpose, to insert a translation of it, as given by Mr. Oberlin in his *Essai d'Annales de la Vie de J. Gutenberg*, pages 3 and 4.

“To the worthy nun Bertha, in the Convent of St. Claire, at Mentz, health and kind and brotherly wishes: Dear sister, in answer to your remark, that the rents and money, which were left you in his will by our dear brother Conrad, to whom may God be merciful! have often and for a long time not been paid you, and that they are again due to you, and amount, as you say, to a considerable sum, I hereby acquaint you, that you may attach and take, on giving a discharge, the sum of twenty gold florins of my rents and revenues placed, as you know, at Mentz and other places, with John Dimgelter, the wax-chandler, and with Veronique Merstersen, at Seilhoven, at Mentz and many other places, as Pedirmann can tell you, at Lorzwiller, Bodenheim, and Muminheym. I purpose, as I hope, if it please God, to see you shortly, so to arrange the business with Pedirmann, that your property may be promptly delivered to you in the manner that it has been left and appointed. I expect, as below, your immediate answer.

“Given at Strasburg, the fifth day after Sunday, March 24, mccccxiiii. Signed Henne Gensfleisch, called Sulgeloch.”

the double capacity of nobleman and citizen, that his name is found inserted in the register or list of those liable, in 1437, to the wine duty in that city; a circumstance which, according to all appearances, has misled those who have fixed the place of his birth at Strasburg.

L. John Guttenberg was cited in 1437, before the civil power of Strasburg, by Anne, called *zur Isernen Thür* (iron-door), to whom he had made a promise of marriage. It is commonly believed that he married her, in consequence of this legal proceeding, since in the before-mentioned register we find recorded the name of Anne de Guttenberg, which would appear to designate the above Anne zur Isernen Thür, surnamed de Guttenberg from the name of her husband.

LI. But passing over this and reverting to the subject of our present enquiry, let us now examine the most essential part of the documents in question, namely, the papers of the law-suit instituted, in the year 1439, against John Guttenberg by George and Nicholas Dritzehen, brothers, of Strasburg.^o These papers make us acquainted with the

⁴⁰ The sentence given in this action, by the magistrates of Strasburg, is dated the 12th. of December, 1439.

first attempts at the art of printing which were made in that city.

LII. Being possessed of many secrets in the arts, John Guttenberg discovered a part of them, for the sum of 160 florins, to Andrew Dritzehen, John Riffe, and Andrew Heilmann, with whom he contracted a partnership, directed to certain specific objects.

LIII. Andrew Dritzehen and A. Heilmann, having one day called upon Guttenberg, at his residence at St. Arbogaste, without the gate of the city of Strasburg, perceived that he was particularly engaged with a wonderful and unknown art, of which he had carefully reserved the secret to himself; they, therefore, entreated him in the most urgent manner to communicate it to them. Guttenberg, having consented to this, entered into a new partnership with them for five years, on the two following conditions: namely, 1st. that his partners should pay to him, John Guttenberg, another sum of 250 florins, 100 of which should be paid immediately, and the remaining 150 at a certain fixed period; 2d. that, if during the continuance of the co-partnership, any one of the parties should die, the survivors should pay to his heirs the sum of 100 florins, in consideration of

which all the effects should become the common property of the surviving partners.

LIV. Andrew Dritzehen remained indebted to Guttenberg in the sum of 85 florins, when he died. George and Nicholas Dritzehen, on the death of their brother Andrew, demanded to be admitted as his successors in the partnership; this demand being refused, they brought an action, before the magistrates of Strasburg, against John Guttenberg as principal partner. Guttenberg, having grounded his defence on the last contract, which he verified by oath, was, together with his surviving partners, relieved from the demand, by the judgment of the magistrates, on the 12th. of December, 1439, on paying to the heirs of A. Dritzehen the sum of 15 florins, in completion of the sum of 100 florins stipulated in the contract, and of which 85 were still due to him by the deceased.—*Schoepflin, Vind. Typog. Document. No. 3.*

LV. I shall now shew from the depositions of the witnesses examined in this cause, that the mechanical secret, which was the object of the above noticed partnership, and which J. Guttenberg concealed with so much care, was the discovery of the art of printing.

LVI. Anne, wife of John Schultheiss, faggot-

maker, declared that Laurence Beildeck, came one day to their house to seek Nicholas Dritzehen, his relation, and that he said to him, my dear Nicholas Dritzehen, Andrew Dritzehen, of happy memory, has left four pages arranged in a press, Guttenberg requests you to remove them and take them to pieces, so that no one may be able to see what they are, for he does not wish any one to see them.⁴¹ *

LVII. John Schultheiss, husband of the preceding witness, deposed to nearly the same effect.†

⁴¹ I shall insert here the original text and the Latin translation of Mr. Schoepflin.—*Vindic. Typog. Doc. No. 2.*

Original Text.

* Frouwe Ennel Hanns Schult-
heissen frouwe des holtzmans hat
geseit das Lorentz Beildeck zu ei-
ner zit inn ir hus kommen sy zu
Claus Dritzehen irem vetter und
sprach zu ime, lieber Claus Drit-
zehen, Andres Dritzehen setig hat
iiij stücke in einer pressen ligen,
do hatt Gutenberg gebetten das ir
die usz der pressen nement und die
von einander legent uff das man
nit gewissen kune was es sy dann
er hatt nit gerne das das iemand
sihet.

† Item Hannsz Schultheisz
hatt geseit das Lorentz Beildeck
zu einer zit heim inn sin husz
kommen sy zü Claus Dritzehen

Latin Translation.

* Anna Joh. Schultheissii
lignarii conjux, professa est,
Nicolaum Beildeck aliquando
domum suam ad Nicolaum
Dritzehen, suum cognatum,
venisse, eique dixisse: mi Ni-
colae Dritzehen! Andreas
Dritzehen, beatæ memoriæ,
quatuor paginas prelo subjece-
rat, quas ut indè auferres atque
disjiceres, Gutenberg rogavit,
ne quis rem incognitam addis-
ceret, nolle enim se quenquam
mortalium eam videre.

† Item Johannes Schulthe-
iss dixit, Laurentium Beildeck
aliquando domum suam venisse
ad Nicolaum Dritzehen, mor-

LVIII. Conrad Sahspach, turner, deposed that Andrew Heilmann, came to him one day, in the Merchants'-street, and said, Conrad, Andrew Dritzehen is dead, and as you made the press and are well acquainted with this business, go and take the pages from the press, and make them fall to pieces, so that no one may know what they are.*

LVIX. The evidence of Laurence Beildeck, the servant of Guttenberg, is still more decisive; he

als diser gezeuge in heim geführt hette, als Andres Dritzehen sin bruder selige von todes wegen abgangen was, und sprach da Lorentz Beildeck zu Claus Dritzehen, Andres Dritzehen uwer bruder selige had iiij stücke undenan inn einer pressen ligen, da hatt uch Hanns Gutenberg gebetten das ir die darusz nement und uff die presse legent von einander so kan man nit gesehen was das ist.

* Item Cunrad Sahspach hatt geseit das Andres Heilmann zu einer zit zu ime kommen sy inn Kremer gasse und sprach zu ime lieber Cunrad als Andres Dritzehen abgangen ist da hastu die pressen gemäht und weist umb die sache do gang do hin und nym die stücke usz der pressen und zerlege si von einander, so weis nyemand was es ist.

tuo jam Andreâ Dritzehen, hujus fratre, eundemque Laurentium Beildeck Nicolao Dritzehen sic locutum esse: Andreas Dritzehen frater tuus beatæ memoriæ quatuor paginas prelo subjecerat, quas inde auferres, prelo imponeres et rumperes Johannes Gutenberg rogavit, nequis rem introspiceret.

* Item Conradus Sahspach dixit, Andream Heilmann aliquando ad se in plateam Mercatorum venisse atque dixisse: mi Conrade, cum Andreas Dritzehen mortuus sit, et tu prelum confeceris, reique conscius sis, abi, exime prelo paginas, disjice illas, et nemo sciet, quid rei sit.

declared, that John Guttenberg had sent him to Nicholas Dritzehen's house, after the death of his brother Andrew, to tell him to be particularly careful not to let the press, which was in his house, be seen by any person whatever. He also declared, that Guttenberg had commanded him to go immediately to the place where the presses were, and open that which had two screws, in order that the pages might fall in pieces, and then to put these pieces either within or upon the press; for, if that was done, no one would be able to comprehend the secret.*

* *Lorentz Beildeck het geseit das Johann Gutenberg in zu einer zit geschickt het zu Claus Dritzehen, nach Andres sins bruder seligen dode und det Clausen Dritzehen sagen das er die presse die er hunder im hett nieman oigete zoigete, das ouch diser gezug det, und rctte ouch me und sprach er sollte sich bekumben so vil und gon über die presse und die mit den zweyen reurbelin uff dun so vielent die stücke von einander, dieselben stücke solt er dann in die presse oder uff die pressc lege so kunde darnach nieman gesehen noch ut gemercken.*

* *Laurentius Beildeck dixit, se aliquando à Johanne Gutenberg ad Nicolaum Dritzehen post mortem Andreæ, fratris ejusdem, missum esse, ut ipsi nunciaret, ne prelum, quod apud se haberet, cuiquam monstraret; idque se curasse. Adidit, Gutenberg ipsi insuper mandasse, ut subito ad prela se conferret, et illud prelum, quod duabus cochleis munitum esset, aperiret, ut paginæ dilabantur in partes, easque partes vel intra vel supra prelum poneret. Ita neminem rem vel inspecturum, vel aliquid ejus intellecturum.*

LX. Anthony Heilmann, also declared, that he knew very well, that Guttenberg had sent his servant to both the Andrews (Andrew Dritzehen and Andrew Heilmann), to ask for all the forms, which were thrown down in his presence, because there were some corrections to be made in them. Heilmann added, that, as after the death of Andrew a great number of persons had become curious to see the press, Guttenberg repeatedly sent his servant to take it down, that it might thus be withdrawn from observation.*

LXI. Lastly, John Dunne, goldsmith, said, that about three years before he had received from

* *Dirre gezüge hat ouch gezeit das er wol wisse das Gutenberg un-
lange vor wünahten sinen knecht
sante zu den beden Andressen, alle
formen zu holen, und wurdent zur
lossen das er ess sehe, und in joch
ctliche formen ruwete. Do noch
do Andres selige abeginge, und
dirre gezüge wol wuste das lüte
gern hettent die presse gesehen, do
spreche Gutenberg sū soltent noch
der pressen senden er forhte das
man sū sehe, do sante er sinen
knecht harjn sū zur legen.*

* *Idem testis insuper dixit,
se probè scire, Gutenberg paulo
ante nativitatis festum famu-
lum suum ad utrumque An-
dream misisse, ut omnes formas
peteret, quæ in conspectu ejus
disjectæ, quòd nonnulla in illis
emendanda reperiret. Deinde
cum post mortem Andreæ hic
testis haud ignoraret, multos
curiosos esse præla videndi,
Gutenberg mandasse, ut quen-
dam mitterent, qui impediret,
nequis præla videret, suumque
famulum misisse ad ea disji-
cienda.*

Guttenberg nearly 100 florins, for articles required in the art of printing.*

LXII. These depositions shew us so clearly and precisely the first dawns of the rising art of printing, invented by the happy genius of John Guttenberg, that no one, I think, can reasonably entertain any doubts on the subject.

LXIII. Indeed it may be said, that the opinion of bibliographers is not divided upon it; it is conceded without hesitation, that the art of printing is here spoken of, but the question in dispute is, whether John Guttenberg employed, in his attempts, fixed characters on blocks of wood, or separate letters. Many think, not without good grounds for such an opinion, that printing with separate letters, it little matters of what material, is the subject of these depositions; and this opinion, notwithstanding the objections which have been made to it, is certainly supported by strong arguments.

LXIV. In fact, the depositions of these witnesses seem to prove, that it is not printing with solid

* *Item Hanns Dünne der golt-smyt hat geseit, das er vor dryen joren oder doby Gutenberg by den hundert guldin abe verdienet habe alleine das zu dem trucken gehoret.*

* *Item Johannes Dunne aurifaber dixit, se jam ante tres vel circiter annos, ad centum florenorum pretium pro rebus ad impressionem pertinentibus à Gutenbergio accepisse.*

blocks, but the true typographic art, printing properly so called, namely, with separate letters or types, that is here spoken of. Whence otherwise could arise the eagerness of Guttenberg to send his servant to the house of the deceased, with an order to go directly to the presses, "*to open that which had two screws, in order that the pages might fall in pieces, and then to put those pieces either within or upon the press ?*" If the pages had been formed of solid blocks, how could they have fallen to pieces, or have become disarranged like separate letters, on being loosened from the press? Besides, what advantage could result from placing them upon the press, the better to conceal the secret? Such a proceeding would, on the contrary, have been the means of discovering it, for it would be very easy to ascertain the purport of solid blocks on being exposed to view, especially as the art of printing images, with sentences or explanations, from engravings on wood, had been for a long time known in Germany, as has been already seen.⁴² Moreover, the necessity is not apparent of having forms and presses for printing with solid blocks, from which the impression was taken by the rubber of the card-makers.

⁴² See the articles xxii. xxxi. and xxxii.

LXV. It need not be doubted, that, if the pages here mentioned had been composed of fixed characters engraved on blocks of wood, Guttenberg would have ordered his servant to conceal them somewhere, or to bring them to his house, instead of exposing them to the view of every one, by causing them to be placed upon the press; but Guttenberg had no occasion to take this precaution with separate letters, which, on being once disarranged and out of the form, could furnish to no one the least idea of the art, at a time when printing, properly so called, was completely unknown.

LXVI. Now, it must be confessed, that the secret, alluded to in the extracts from the examinations inserted above, cannot be otherwise explained than by the mechanism of the art of printing with separate letters, no matter of what material, whether of wood or of metal,⁴³ arranged in forms, and fixed in their places by screws.

⁴³ Some persons are of opinion that J. Guttenberg made use of metal types; they ground this opinion on the mention, which is made in the minutes of the law suit, of a certain quantity of lead, bought by his partner, Dritzehen, and also upon the declaration of the goldsmith, John Dunne, who deposed, that he furnished Guttenberg with articles required in the art of printing, to the amount of 100 florins. This opinion certainly appears well founded; separate letters made of wood, (which I

LXVII. It results then, from incontrovertible documents, from authentic proofs, which are the only true basis of history, that John Gaensfleisch, alias Songerloch, alias Guttenberg of Mentz, the first whose attention was occupied by the discovery of printing, after many attempts, had, in the year 1439, made such progress as to establish in the city of Strasburg a press and forms, as well as divers other materials used in printing;⁴⁴ but in such a

very much doubt have ever been used,) could not be employed in the execution of a typographical work, on account of their fragility and the spongy nature of the material, subject to continual dilation and contraction.

⁴⁴ Mr. Meerman, not being able to remain ignorant of the truth resulting from the authentic documents discovered by Mr. Schoepflin, concedes the fact: he acknowledges that printing with moveable letters is there alluded to; but, as he is always well provided with a stock of hypotheses and conjectures to oppose to the most decisive proofs, he replies, that this circumstance does not necessarily imply that Guttenberg was not the imitator of Coster, it not being at all probable that the latter, who was born 30 years before Guttenberg, should have delayed, till the last moment of his life (according to him 1440), to make this discovery, and thus allow all the glory arising from it to accrue to Guttenberg: "Laurentium itaque, qui triginta ferè annis remotior fuit, fingere haud licet extremo demum vitæ tempore detexisse artem, ut honori omnia cedant Guttenbergio."—*Orig. Typ. vol. i. page 196.* This reply shews the reason

manner, that notwithstanding the efforts of Guttenberg and his partners, they had not the good fortune to succeed completely in their undertaking, owing either to the imperfection of the newly invented implements, or to other causes which are quite unknown to us; this, however, ought not to prevent us from declaring, that the city of Strasburg is the real birth-place of the typographic art. It was at Strasburg, that printing, properly so called, was, to make use of such an expression, rough-hewn by J. Guttenberg, and afterwards polished and perfected by himself, in his native city of Mentz, by means of metal types, cast in moulds.⁵ That this was the fact I shall now proceed to shew.

LXVIII. The law suit between Guttenberg and G. and N. Dritzehen being decided, it is evident that the partnership with John Riff and Andrew

why Mr. Meerman opposes the opinion of Seiz, that Coster died in 1467, that is, a year before Guttenberg.

⁵ In page 43 of *Jac. Wimphelingii Germania cis Rhenum*, (printed at Strasburg, in 4to. in 1501,) we find the following remark: "Urbs vestra (Strasburg) plurimum excellere videtur impressoriæ artis origine, licet in Moguntiaco consummatæ." And in his *Epitome Rerum Germanicarum* (printed in 1505), chapter lxxv: "Is enim, *Gutenbergius*, primus artem impressoriam, quam latiniore excusoriam vocant, in urbe Argentinensi invenit. Inde Moguntiam veniens eandem feliciter complevit."

Heilmann, confirmed by the judgment of the magistrates of Strasburg, ⁶ was continued according to the terms of the original contract; but we are completely ignorant of the subsequent transactions of this company, and of the advantages which they derived from the secret of the art of printing. Mr. Schoepflin is of opinion, that during its continuance they printed divers books, without date, and without the name of the city and of the printer; but it does not appear that there are good grounds for this opinion. What he advances respecting the ancient editions without date, adduced in support of it, can only be regarded as a conjecture which proves nothing, and by means of which, as we have already said in article XVIII. every one might fix the origin of printing at such era, or at such place, as he chose.

LXIX. It appears, however, certain, that John Guttenberg, the head of this company, still resided in Strasburg, in the year 1444; ⁷ but, as his name

⁶ “Nos prætor et senatus auditâ dictâ actione et exceptione . . . jubemus ergo, standum esse conventioni.”

Schoepflin, Docum. No. 3, page 26.

⁷ Although Guttenberg's name is found inserted in the registers of the wine duty, in 1444, in the city of Strasburg, it is nevertheless certain, according to a document produced by

does not occur after that period in the registers of that city, it is probable that he soon after changed his residence. The cause of this removal is not known; dissatisfied, perhaps, with his partners, and with the bad success of his mechanical projects, he formed the resolution of quitting Strasburg, where he had lived more than twenty years, and of returning to his native city Mentz, in the design, no doubt, of there continuing his typographical labours.

LXX. In fact, authentic deeds incontestibly prove, that John Guttenberg, who had expended, at Strasburg, a great part of his fortune in his mechanical pursuits, contracted at Mentz, in 1450, with John Fust, a rich citizen of that place, a new partnership for the establishment of a printing office.

LXXI. The considerable sums of money advanced by Fust to Guttenberg, who was charged with the management of this establishment, in which was printed, for the first time, the famous Latin

Kohler (*Ehrenrettung Gutenberg's*), that, in 1443, he had already hired a house at Mèntz. Guttenberg is called, in this document, Gaensfleisch, the elder; because at that time his uncle was dead, and consequently he was really the elder.—*See note 13.*

Bible, which has created such an interest amongst bibliographers, gave rise to another law-suit, by which Fust sought to recover of Guttenberg the sum of 2020 gold florins (which sum included 800 florins which had been advanced in virtue of the deed of partnership), together with the interest. Guttenberg, in his defence, submitted, that the first 800 florins had not been paid to him all at once, according to the terms of the partnership-deed, and that they had been expended in the preparations for the work ; as to the other sums, he offered to render an account, but he did not think that he was liable to the payment of interest. The judges having tendered the oath to Fust, and he having taken it, Guttenberg was adjudged to pay the interest, as well as that part of the principal which his accounts shewed had been applied to his own individual use ; for this Fust demanded and obtained the act of the notary Helmasperger, on the 6th of November, 1455.⁸

⁴⁸ This act, passed in the city of Mentz, before the notary Ulric Helmasperger and witnesses, will be found printed in *Senkenberg, Select. Jur. et Anecd.* vol. i. no. 3 ; in *Wolffii Monumenta Typographica*, vol. i. page 472 ; in *Schwarzii Prim. Docum.* vol. i. page 5, &c. Fournier also inserts a translation of it in his *Origine de l'Imprimerie*.

LXXII. The partnership being dissolved in consequence of this law-suit, all the printing materials of Guttenberg, moulds, types, and newly invented implements fell into the hands of J. Fust. This is proved by the fact, (as Mr. Fischer has clearly shewn in his *Essai sur les Monumens Typographiques de Gutenberg*,) that the initial letters, of which Guttenberg had before made use, were afterwards employed in the Psalters of 1457 and 1459, printed by Fust and Schoeffer; besides, in the beforementioned act of the 6th of Nov. 1455, Guttenberg acknowledges, that he had mortgaged his materials to Fust for the sums of money, which the latter had advanced to him;—it is therefore more than probable, that when he found himself compelled, by this judicial act to reimburse him, Guttenberg, whose own means were exhausted by such great expenses, abandoned his materials to Fust, in payment of his advances.

LXXIII. After this event, Guttenberg is represented to have travelled, from vexation, sometimes to Strasburg and at others to Harlem; but all that has been said upon this subject, is nothing but idle tales invented by system-mongers. On the contrary, an authentic deed (I am not here speaking of conjectures), executed in the city of Mentz, in 1459,

between this same Guttenberg, his brother, and a sister, who was a nun in the convent of St. Claire, in the same city,⁹ incontestibly proves, that, far

⁹ The following is a translation of this deed as it is given in the *Essai d'Annales de la Vie de Jean Gutenberg, par J. J. Oberlin; Strasbourg, An IX.* in 8vo. p. 4 et seq. :—

“ We, Henne (John) Genszfleisch de Sulgeloeh, named Gudinberg, and Friele Genszfleisch, brothers, do affirm and publicly declare by these presents and make known to all, that, with the advice and consent of our dear cousins, John and Friele and Pedirmann Genszfleisch, brothers, of Mentz, we have renounced and do renounce by these presents, for us and for our heirs, simply, totally, and at once, without fraud or deceit, all the property which has passed by means of our sister Hebele, to the convent of St. Claire of Mentz, in which she has become a nun, whether the said property has come to it on the part of our father Henne Genszfleisch, who gave it himself, or in whatsoever manner the property may have come to it, whether in grain, ready money, furniture, jewels, or whatever it may be, that the respectable nuns, the abbess, and sisters of the said convent, have received in common or individually, or other persons of the convent (have received) from the said Hebele, be it little or much, and we have promised and do promise by these presents, in good faith, for us and for our heirs, that neither we, nor any person on our part, nor yet our said cousins, nor any of their heirs, nor any person on their part, shall neither demand again nor claim of the said convent, nor of the abbess, nor of the convent in general, nor of the persons who may be found therein individually, the said property of whatever kind it may be, neither wholly nor in part, and that we will never demand it again,

from being discouraged by the misfortunes incident to great geniusses, Gutttenberg established a new printing office, at Mentz, in which he printed many

either through an ecclesiastical or civil court, or without the aid of the law, and that neither we nor our heirs will ever molest the said convent either by words or deeds, neither secretly nor publicly, in any manner. And as to the books, which I, the said Henne, have given to the library of the convent, they are to remain there always and for ever, and I, the said Henne, propose also to give in future, without disguise, to the library of the said convent, for the use of the present and future nuns, for their religious worship, either for reading or chaunting, or in whatever manner they may wish to make use of them according to the rules of their order, *all the books which I, the said Henne, have printed up to this hour, or which I shall hereafter print, in such quantities as they may wish to make use of;** and for this the said abbess, the successors and nuns of the said convent of St. Claire, have declared and promised to acquit me and my heirs of the claim, which my sister Hebele had to the 60 florins, which I and my said brother Friele had promised to pay and deliver to the said Hebele, as her portion and share arising from the house, which Henne, our father, assigned to him for his share, in virtue of the writings which were drawn up thereupon, without fraud or deceit. And in order that this may be observed by us and by our heirs, steadfastly and to its full extent, we have given the said nuns and their convent and order these present writings, sealed with our seals. Signed and

* This passage is very positive; in 1459, Gutttenberg had then printed books and he purposed to print others in future; he had consequently an established printing-office at that time.

works without interruption till 1465, when having been admitted into the number of the gentlemen of the household of the Elector Adolphus of Nassau, with a handsome pension,⁵⁰ (which he does not appear to have long enjoyed, having died before the 24th of February, 1468,) he abandoned the practice of an art, which had been a source to him of so many vexations and disputes.

LXXIV. It is quite true, that up to the present time, not one printed work has been discovered, bearing the name of John Guttenberg, but it is now so well known, as not to admit of a doubt, that the *Catholicon Johannis de Balbis*, printed at Mentz, in 1460, is one of the productions of this inventor of the art; for the characters are exactly the same as those which were afterwards used in the *Vocabularium ex quo*, printed in the office of Guttenberg, in 1467; which office passed after his death into the possession of Conrad Humery, syndic of Mentz, who, from all appearances, had contributed towards the expenses of its establishment.

LXXV. This is clearly shewn by a declaratory delivered the year of the birth of J. C. 1459, on the day of St. Margaret."

⁵⁰ According to letters patent of the 17th of January, 1465. Vide Georg. Ch. Jo. *Scrip. Rer. Mog.* vol. iii. page 424.

letter, dated the 24th of February, in the year 1468, which will be found in the third volume of *Script. Rer. Mog.* at page 424, and in *Schwarzii Primar. Docum.* vol. i. pages 26 and 27. In this letter Conrad Humery promises the Elector Adolphus, archbishop of Mentz, that he will not sell to foreigners the printing materials of John Guttenberg, whereof he was the possessor, and that he will always give the preference to the inhabitants of the city of Mentz.⁵¹ It in fact appears, that a short time afterwards Humery sold the printing materials in question to Nicholas Bechtermuntze, a printer at Elfeld, where the elector resided, and which place consequently enjoyed the same rights and privileges as the city of Mentz itself.

LXXVI. But let us now revert to John Fust,

⁵¹ This letter proves that John Guttenberg was dead at the date of the 24th of February, 1468.

⁵² This Nicholas Bechtermuntze reprinted, at Elfeld, in 1469, the *Vocabularium ex quo*, which had before appeared there in 1467. The characters, employed in the printing of these two editions, are exactly the same as those which were used in printing the famous *Catholicon Joannis de Janua vel de Balbis* of 1460, of which this *Vocabularium ex quo* contains some extracts as well as a part of the subscription. This victoriously demonstrates, that the *Catholicon*, printed at Mentz, in 1460, without the printer's name, issued from the press of J. Guttenberg.

whom we left the master and possessor of all the materials of the original establishment of Guttenberg, in consequence of the compromise or judicial act of November 6th, 1455, already mentioned. It appears, that he conducted himself in the sequel of this affair with little generosity, for, without being an artist himself, or without having done any thing except furnishing money to Guttenberg, at a great interest, for the establishment of the printing office, he attributed all the honour of it to himself, in the subscriptions of his editions, without making the least mention of him, who had done every thing, and who was the inventor of the art.

LXXVII. Fust, however, knew so well how to derive advantage from it, that with the help of a skilful scribe, named Peter Schoeffer de Gernsheim,⁵³ (a young man of considerable talent, extremely

⁵³ The name of this ingenious artist, is variously spelt in the ancient editions as well as in the manuscripts of the time ; we there indifferently meet with Scheffer, Schöffcr, Schæffer, Schoiffer, Schoifher, Schoyffer, Schoyffher, and Schaefer. As this word signifies in German a *shepherd*, it is also met with latinised into *Petrus Opilio*. Schoeffer is surnamed *de Gernsheim*, the place of his birth, in the country of Darmstadt, but dependent on the electorate of Mentz. This name of Gernsheim or Gernssheim is also found differently spelt in ancient documents.

ingenious, and of an inventive mind, and who, during the partnership, was probably more than initiated into the secret operations of the art,) he published, a short time after his separation with Guttenberg, namely, in the month of August, in the year 1457, the beautiful edition of the *Psal-morum Codex*, the first printed book, as yet known to the world, with the name of the place where printed, that of its printers, and the date of the year in which it was executed.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ In the year 1766, Mr. Schelhorn, an intelligent literary character, discovered a copy, printed upon vellum with cast types of metal, of the letters of indulgence of Pope Nicholas V. to those who would go to the succour of the King of Cyprus against the Turks; these bear date in the year 1454. Mr. Hæberlin, who has reprinted them in his *Analecta mediæ ævi*, observes, that these letters were printed in the same year in which they were issued, namely, in 1454, although neither the name of the place in which they were printed, nor that of their printer, is designated on them. This opinion of Mr. Hæberlin has been adopted by most bibliographers; but for my part I can not accede to it; as, on the contrary, I think that this work, printed with the characters used, for the first time, by Fust and Schoeffer in the *Rationale Durandi* of 1459, is of a date long subsequent to that of 1454, and it is certainly later than the *Psalter* of 1457. We have, amongst many others, a similar instance in the *Bulla Retractationum Pii Papæ II.* the successor of Calixtus V. dated on the 5th of the kalends of May, in the

LXXVIII. The short space of time, which intervened between the separation of Fust and Gutenberg and the date of the publication of this Psalter, has furnished grounds for supposing, that the types, used in the execution of it, were entirely prepared and completed by John Guttenberg, before his rupture with Fust; in fact, it does not appear probable, that in eighteen months Peter Schoeffer, who perfected, it is true, according to the evidence of Trithemius, the art of casting letters, should have been able to prepare all the types necessary for the printing of so considerable a work, as well as the implements used in casting them, which it would be equally necessary to invent and make. The contrary is moreover proved by the circumstance, that the large initial letters of this edition of the Psalter, which the curious admire even at the present day, were before employed in the earlier works, which, beyond all doubt, were

year 1463; and although this Bull is addressed to the rector and members of the University of Cologne, and was printed in that very city by Ulric Zell, the first who introduced the art of printing there, (a remarkable circumstance, which, to all appearances, proves that it was submitted to the press immediately after its receipt,) it is nevertheless thought that it was not printed till some years after the date of its dispatch, in 1463.

printed by Gutttenberg.—See on this subject Fischer's *Essai sur les Monumens Typographiques de Gutenberg*, pages 44 and 74.

LXXIX. The supposition, that the types, used in this edition of the Psalter, were formed of wood, is untenable; how, in fact, could types of that material have lasted through three other editions which were afterwards printed from them? For Fust and Schoeffer reprinted this Psalter in 1459; after the death of Fust, Schoeffer published a third edition of it in 1490, and a fourth in 1502, and always with the same types. It is, however, a singular circumstance, that Fust and Schoeffer never used these types in the printing of any other work; it is probable, that, from their great size, they were only found fit for the printing of such kinds of church books as were used in the choir.

LXXX. But, however this may be, it is now no longer doubted, that except the initial letters, which are of wood, all the rest of the Psalter is printed with cast metal types, of which some authors have attributed the invention to Peter Schoeffer, but without any foundation. The evidence of Trithemius (*Annal. Hirsang. vol. ii. page 421*), upon which they advance such an assertion, clearly proves the contrary; for Trithemius, who had this fact

from Schoeffer himself, positively asserts, that John Guttenberg and Fust discovered the art of casting metal types, which they were before obliged to cut with the hand; but that Peter Schoeffer afterwards invented a more easy mode, which gave to this art a new degree of perfection. I shall here insert Trithemius's own words: "Post hæc inventis successerunt subtiliora, inveneruntque (*Joh. Gutenberg et Joh. Faustus*) modum fundendi formas omnium latini alphabeti litterarum, quas ipsi matrices nominabant, ex quibus rursum æneos sive stanneos characteres fundebant ad omnem pressuram sufficientes, quos priùs manibus sculpebant. Et reverà sicuti ante xxx fermè annos ex ore Petri Opilioni de Gernsheim civis Moguntini, qui gener erat primi artis inventoris, audiui, magnam à primo inventionis suæ hæc ars impressoria habuit difficultatem Petrus autem memoratus Opilio, tunc famulus, postea gener, sicut diximus, inventoris primi Johannis Fust, homo ingeniosus et prudens, faciliorem modum fundendi characteres excogitavit, et artem, ut nunc est, complevit."

LXXXI. This evidence is very clear, exact, and positive; it is moreover that of a contemporary author, who learned the fact from the mouth of Schoeffer himself. But notwithstanding

all this, (as it is not too favourable to the system of Mr. Meerman, who absolutely requires, that the characters, employed in the printing of this Psalter, should have been cut with the hand upon pieces of cast metal, and that it should have been Schoeffer, who discovered the art of casting letters,) he pretends, that a considerable omission has been made in the text of Trithemius, through the fault of those who copied it. This omission he ventures to supply as best suits his fancy, and by such means extracts from this passage a forced sense, analogous to his own ideas, and of which Trithemius had never dreamed. It is in the following manner that he reads and interprets the above quoted passage : “ *Post hæc inventis successerunt subtiliora, inveneruntque modum fundendi formas (id est corpora) omnium latini alphabeti litterarum ex iis, quas ipsi matrices nominabant, ex quibus rursum (h. e. postmodum, sive successu temporis, ut opponatur sequenti particulæ prius) æneos sive stanneos characteres (id est literas corporibus impositas ; hoc enim sensu vocem characteres supra jam adhibuit) fundebant ad omnem pressuram sufficientes, quos prius (quando scil. non nisi corpora fundebantur) manibus sculpebant.* ” — (*Orig. Typ. vol. ii. pages 46 and 47.*) I leave the sensible reader to examine the whole of

this far-fetched interpretation. I will only say, that Mr. Meerman pretends, without justice, that, by the word *formas*, Trithemius has intended to signify the bodies, or pieces of metal, upon which the letters were cut ; for it does not seem probable, that this author would have used the words *formas* and *matrices* as synonymous ; as if the matrices were any thing but the real moulds in which the letters were cast. Trithemius, therefore, very properly apprises us, that these moulds were called by their inventors *matrices*, a name, which they still preserve in the typographic art ; for it would not have been very easy to comprehend the meaning of the word *matrices*, in this passage, at a time when the art was little known, if the author had not taken the precaution to tell us, that it signified moulds for casting types in. Mr. Meerman adds, that Trithemius could not say, without committing an error, that the artists, of whom he speaks, cast matrices, because the matrices, says he, are not cast. This is true, as regards the practice of the art in the present day ; but I cannot conceive, how Mr. Meerman ventures to tell us, contrary to the evidence of Trithemius,⁵⁵ that the matrices were not

⁵⁵ The passage of Trithemius could not be clearer : Guttenberg and Fust, according to him discovered the means of casting

then cast ; for this was the imperfection of the art, which Schoeffer removed by the invention of punches. The necessity they were under, of casting the matrices was precisely the cause of the progress of the art being retarded, and of the artists being obliged to occupy so much time, and to take such pains in providing the requisite quantity of types. This was the defect in the art to which Trithemius alludes in this passage, in order to render more conspicuous the talent of Peter Schoeffer, who corrected it by the invention of punches for striking the matrices ; by this happy invention, he facilitated and perfected the art of casting types ; “*faciliorem modum fundendi characteres excogitavit, et artem, ut nunc est, complevit.*”

LXXXII. It is therefore manifest, that the art of casting types was known to John Guttenberg, to whom we are also indebted for the invention of them ; it was afterwards perfected by Peter Schoeffer, by means of punches for striking the matrices. This perfection given to the art, by Schoeffer, is

moulds for all the letters of the alphabet, which they called *matrices*, serving in their turn, for casting the metal letters or types : “*In-
veneruntque modum fundendi formas omnium latini alphabeti
litterarum, quas ipsi matrices nominabant, ex quibus rursum
æneos sive stanneos characteres fundebant.*”

clearly pointed out in *Jo. Frid. Faust. de Aschaffenburg, Relatio de Origine Typographiæ*; apud *Wolf. Monum. Typ. vol. i.* page 468, by these words: “*Petrus Schoefferus Gernsheimensis, singulari Dei instinctu rationem invenit, quâ characteres matrici, ut vocant, inciderentur, et ex eâ funderentur.*”

LXXXIII. It was by the discovery of punches, that Peter Schoeffer acquired the glory of being regarded as the father of the true art of printing; it was also for this discovery, that he was thought deserving of the honour of becoming the son-in-law of his master; for we are told, in the relation of J. Frid. Faustus, of Aschaffenburg, drawn up from the family documents and papers, that Schoeffer, having secretly struck a complete alphabet of matrices, presented it one day to his master, with the types which he had cast from them; with these I. Fust was so highly pleased, that he gave him his only daughter in marriage: “*Hic (P. Schoefferus) clam matricem abecedariam incidit, et cum characteribus inde fuis hero suo Johanni Fausto ostendit, qui huic adeo placuerunt, ut gaudiorum plenus ei protinus filiam unicam Christinam desponderet, ac paulò post in uxorem daret.*”—*Wolf. Mon. Typ. vol. i.* pages 468 and 469. This circumstance is confirmed by the evidence of John Schoeffer, Peter’s

son, who in the colophon of Trithemius's *Brev. Histor. Francorum*, which he printed at Mentz, in 1515, asserts, that Fust gave his daughter in marriage to Schoeffer, as a recompense for his laborious and important discoveries: "Cui etiam filiam suam Christinam Fusthin, pro dignâ laborum multarumque adinventionem remuneratione, nuptui dedit."⁵⁶

LXXXIV. The types, cast from the new matrices struck by Peter Schoeffer, were used, for the first time, in the printing of the *Durandi Rationale divin. Offic.* finished on the 16th day of October, 1459, nearly three months after the publication of the second edition of the Psalter, of the 29th of August, 1459, executed, as has before been said, with the same types as were employed in the first edition of the 14th of August, 1457.

LXXXV. In the year 1460, Fust and Schoeffer printed the *Constitutiones Clementis V.*; and in 1462, the celebrated Latin Bible, so well known in the republic of letters. The above five books are

⁵⁶ This marriage, as is well observed in the *Journal des Savans*, of the year 1741, must have occurred between the years 1462 and 1465; for in the subscription of the Latin Bible of 1462, Schoeffer is styled *clericus* (copyist, scribe), whilst in the edition of the *Cicronis Officia* of 1465, Fust calls him his son-in-law, "*pour meus.*"

the earliest printed works, at present known, in which the date, the name of their printers, and the place where they were printed, are found distinctly indicated.

LXXXVI. If to these five works we also add the *Catholicon Johannis de Janua*, or *de Balbis*, printed at Mentz, in 1460, without the name of the printer, but which all well-informed bibliographers, now attribute without hesitation to John Guttenberg,⁵⁷ we shall have the six earliest printed books known, bearing a date and indication of the place where they were printed. These six really existing books the city of Mentz (to make use of such an expression), places before our eyes, to prove, that that was the first place in the world in which the

⁵⁷ The subscription of the *Catholicon* of 1640 is in quite a different style from those in the impressions of J. Fust and P. Schoeffer, in which they are usually printed in red; besides the characters, with which the *Catholicon* is printed, are entirely different and very unequal in shape. This work, therefore, can only be attributed to Guttenberg, who, after his separation with Fust, in 1455, continued to practise the art at Mentz, as is evident from the act given at length in note 49. The perfect conformity also of the characters, used in this *Catholicon*, with those of the *Vocabularium ex quo*, of 1467 and 1469, of which we have spoken in the art. LXXIV and LXXV, and in note 52, proves the truth of this assertion.

art of true printing was exercised in perfection. These proofs are incontestable,—they are unanswerable; they are positive and speaking proofs, which indubitably secure to Mentz the glory of the first establishment of the most interesting and useful of the arts; a glory which many cities have enviously strove to claim, but their pretensions, supported by vague conjectures and frivolous arguments, do not merit discussion. I ought, however, to except the city of Strasburg, the claims of which, being founded upon authentic acts, will be always duly appreciated and held in consideration by all the friends of truth, in spite of the efforts of system-mongers, who make it a point of honour to maintain paradoxes.

LXXXVII. If to the proofs, which have been brought forward in support of its claims, the city of Strasburg could also add that of a single well authenticated book printed by Guttenberg, even should it be without a date,⁵⁸ it is very certain, that this city would have attracted to its side the

⁵⁸ The ancient works, without a date and the name of the place or their printer, brought forward by Schoepflin, in his *Vindiciæ Typographicae*, prove nothing. He attributes them to Guttenberg and his partners, in the city of Strasburg, through pure conjecture, and without any other reasons than those, which,

generality of the suffrages of literary men, and have torn from Mentz the merit of this admirable discovery.

LXXXVIII. That such would have been the result is evident, since notwithstanding the want of such proof, Mr. Meerman has not hesitated to attach himself to the party of Strasburg, in opposition to the pretensions of Mentz;⁵⁹ but the arguments advanced by the learned Schoepflin, in his *Vindiciæ Typographicæ*, founded upon the judicial acts before mentioned, have failed to draw over also to the same party that celebrated literary character, Schellhorn: “Ex illisque (*actis authenticis*) collegit (*Joa.-Dan. Schopflinus*) auream artem non Moguntiæ, sed Argentorati, à laudato Gutenbergio esse inventam. Fateor, parum abfuisse, quin mihi quoque rem istam persuaserit vir disertissimus, nisi scrupuli quidam animum meum adhuc suspensum detinerent.”—*Obs. I. de Typ. Mog. inventa*, pag. 6.

under similar circumstances, influenced Mr. Meerman, some time afterwards, to adduce them in favour of Coster.

⁵⁹ “Quarto loco disquirere juvat, num Gutenbergius typographiæ primus inventor extiterit, atque ita Argentoratum vindicare sibi hanc gloriam jure possit. Et sanè, si soli hic sese opponerent Moguntini, ego quidem à parte starem Argentinensium, quoniam hi, licet per integrum quinquennium, quo illis

LXXXIX. From every thing that has been hitherto said, on consulting only authentic proofs and unequivocal testimony, we may conclude with the greatest confidence: 1st. That John Gaensfleisch, alias Songerloch, alias Guttenberg, was the inventor of printing, for without any other assistance than his own ingenuity, he had, before the year 1439, made such progress as to establish in Strasburg presses, forms, and other implements used in the art of printing; 2d. That on his return to Mentz, his native place, he there, in 1450, contracted a partnership with John Fust, for the establishment of a printing-office, which, after being completed and perfected by the said Guttenberg, passed into the possession of J. Fust, in consequence of the judicial and notarial act of the 6th of November, 1455; 3d. That the said Fust, having become the proprietor of this office, caused to be printed in it, for the first time, with the assistance of Peter Schoeffer, a very ingenious young man and of great talent, the famous *Psalmorum Codex*, finished on the 14th of August, 1457; 4th. That

præivere artem ipsam exsequi non potuerint, ea tamen jam præstitere, nempe preli typorumque solutilium compositione, per quæ facilius patebat aliis ad intima artis penetralia aditus."

—*Orig. Typ. vol. i. page 196.*

the said John Guttenberg invented the art of casting metal types, which perfected the attempts in the typographic art, which he had before made at Strasburg; 5th. That Peter Schoeffer gave the last degree of perfection to the art of casting types, by the invention of punches, for striking the matrices, which they had before been obliged to cast; and 6th. That John Fust, having only furnished the necessary capital for the establishment of the printing-office, and for the execution of the books printed in it, ought only to be considered, in this admirable undertaking, as a sleeping partner, or, if it is thought preferable, as a patron of the typographic art.

XC. It results from all these facts, that the pretended discovery of printing by Laurence Coster, of Harlem, is nothing but an idle fancy, a gossip's tale, first invented by Hadrian Junius, corrected and greatly augmented with many fables, even more visionary, by Scriverius, Seiz, and lastly by Mr. Meerman, who by his new and fictitious details, injurious to the family of Gaensfleisch, respecting the pretended robbery at Harlem, has converted it into a finished romance, of which Laurence Janssoen Coster is the Don Quixote.

THE END.

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